

CBS says crew held in Iraq

NEW YORK (AP) — CBS News reporter Bob Simon and three crew members who disappeared in the northern Saudi desert last month are being held in Baghdad, the president of CBS News said Friday. Eric Ober confirmed a CNN report earlier Friday that the journalists have been held for two weeks in the Iraqi capital. CBS spokesman Tom Goodman said efforts are under way "to secure their safe release and return." The crew were reported missing at the Kuwaiti border Jan. 21, four days after the Gulf war started. CNN quoted what it called reliable sources as saying the fate of the crew would be decided by Saddam Hussein. CBS is "obviously pleased the Iraqis have allowed this information to be released," Mr. Goodman said earlier, following the CNN report. "We hope that the Iraqis recognize the four are journalists and not combatants, and were simply there to cover a story." The four were picked up by the Iraqi military jeep patrol in a remote part of the Kuwait border CNN reported. They "are still being investigated by the Iraqi intelligence service to determine the full circumstances of their capture," CNN correspondent Peter Arnett said. "Apparently, there are three categories they can fall under: Innocents who could be released, prisoners of war or spies," Arnett said. "I am told that President Saddam Hussein will personally

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Iraq offers to leave Kuwait as part of peace plan; Bush rejects gesture with call to oust Saddam Initiative contingent on Mideast linkage

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQ'S TOP leadership said Friday it was willing to withdraw from Kuwait, raising hopes worldwide that the 30-day Gulf war might soon be over.

Jubilant Iraqis fired rifles in the air and shook hands to celebrate the announcement, the first mention of a withdrawal from Kuwait since Iraqi troops invaded on Aug. 2.

The dramatic announcement was hedged with conditions, including the scrapping of economic sanctions, linkage to the Arab-Israeli dispute and an allied troop pullout from the Gulf.

"The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) has announced Iraq's decision to deal with United Nations Security Council Resolution number 660... with the aim of reaching an honorable and acceptable solution, including the withdrawal," said a statement broadcast on Baghdad

Radio.

Until now, President Saddam Hussein has vowed he would never give up an inch of Kuwait territory, which Iraq has declared its 19th province.

Iraq demanded a full ceasefire and the cancellation of all previous Security Council resolutions, including those imposing severe economic sanctions.

The RCC said a pullout from Kuwait must be linked to Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and occupied Syrian and Lebanese territory.

If Israel refused, it said, the Jewish state should face the same sanctions imposed on Baghdad. The RCC, whose meetings are chaired by President Saddam, insisted that the 700,000-strong forces of the U.S.-led coalition withdraw from the region.

It demanded "a genuine democratic exercise" to decide the future of Kuwait, insisted the allied pay war reparations to

Baghdad and demanded cancellation of all Iraqi debts "and those of the region's states which were harmed by the aggression."

U.S.-led allied forces have rejected any link between Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and a solution to the Arab-Israeli dispute. They also demand the return of Kuwait's ruling Al Sabah family to power.

The announcement came exactly a month after expiry of the U.N. deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait.

The announcement stated clearly that the RCC had accepted Resolution 660, which calls for an "immediate and unconditional" end to Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

It also left room for manoeuvre in case Israel rejected withdrawal as it has done before. In such case, the RCC said, the United Nations would apply against the

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Allied raids continue as Iraqis bury shelter victims

Combined agency dispatches

LOW-FLYING allied aircraft blasted the headquarters of Iraq's ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party in a pre-dawn attack Friday.

The warplanes struck after a series of mock air raids that shook the city after midnight (2100 GMT Thursday). The party headquarters in the city centre apparently were vacant at the time of the attack, but the several-storey building sustained massive damage, witnesses reported.

Allied warplanes hit other targets in Baghdad in 31 bombing sorties overnight, a military communiqué said. It said the targets included "bridges and vital public facilities," but provided no details. The communiqué from the general command of the armed forces said the allies also bombed Iraqi military targets in "the southern sector of the operation zone," a reference to Kuwait and southern Iraq.

It said that six allied warplanes were shot down.

The civil defence said 306

bodies had been retrieved by noon (0900 GMT) Friday from the wreckage of a shelter bombed by U.S. aircraft in a night-time air raid Wednesday. The military command's communiqué, released several hours earlier, reported 293 bodies dug out from the rubble, including 91 children, 19 women and 55 teenagers.

Officials say as many as 500 people perished in the attack on the reinforced concrete structure, which the United States claims was used as a command and control centre.

Defence Minister Major General Saadi Tuma Abbas said the U.S.-led allied air war, launched Jan. 17, has "failed to realise their sick ambitions."

"Our forces have been able to absorb these attacks," he said. "Many of our modern, effective weapons have not yet been used."

He said in a ground offensive, the Iraqi military with its weapons "will deal a crushing blow to the aggressors."

Mourners marched alongside flag-covered coffins, fired auto-

matic rifles into the air and cried out for revenge for the U.S. air strike on the bomb shelter.

"By God we swear, we will make them pay their blood for this crime," yelled members of a crowd of 5,000 who marched to a neighbourhood cemetery. "The death of our women and children will not go unavenged."

Other private funerals were held elsewhere in the capital. Meanwhile, the manager of Baghdad's Al Rashid hotel denied U.S. claims that his establishment housed a military communications centre. He allowed foreign reporters to search the 14-storey building.

Information Minister Latif Jassem angrily rejected U.S. assertions that the building blasted on Wednesday was a military command bunker, rather than a civilian air raid shelter. He depicted U.S. President George Bush as a war criminal comparable to Hitler.

"We are told that Hitler burned the Jews," Mr. Jassem told reporters. "Now Bush is burning Iraqi children."



KING MEETS IRANIAN TEAM: His Majesty King Hussein Friday receives an Iranian parliamentary delegation headed by Mohammad Salamati and reviewed bilateral relations and the current situation in the Gulf. The audience was attended by Royal Court Chief Sherif Zaid Ben Shaker and Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Latif Arabiyat (Petra photo).

Jordan welcomes Iraqi move, calls for positive response

By Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan on Friday welcomed the Iraqi peace initiative and described it as a genuine and positive step towards ending the war in the Gulf and solving the region's problems. At the same time, the Kingdom also regretted and criticised the American response to the initiative, characterising U.S. President George Bush's reaction as regrettable, hasty and surprising.

In separate statements Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri and Information Minister Ibrahim Izzeddine described the initiative as a "positive step in the right direction."

Mr. Izzeddine told the Jordan Times that Jordan "welcomes the Iraqi initiative and considers it an opening to peace."

"It is regrettable that President Bush hastily gave his opinion on this initiative. He should have studied more closely," Foreign Minister Masri said in reaction to Mr. Bush's statement on the Iraqi initiative.

"I was surprised at the Amer-

ican reaction because in my opinion the main ideas in the Iraqi initiative were built upon the joint U.S.-Soviet communiqué (of Jan. 29-30) in which the two superpowers highlighted the need to promote a just peace, security and real reconciliation for Israel, Arab states and Palestinians," Mr. Masri said.

The U.S. and Soviet foreign ministers at the time said that this would be a way of dealing with the "causes of instability and the sources of conflict."

In a comment to the Jordan Times on the joint statement earlier, he said that "the linkage (between the Gulf conflict and Palestinian issue) was very positive and better than ever before."

"Iraq was always looking for the linkage and it got it in the U.S.-Soviet statement, but the U.S. was also looking for a commitment to withdraw by Iraq and now it has it," Mr. Masri said. "It makes a nice marriage."

Jordan also saw the Iraqi acceptance of United Nations Resolution 660 as the most substantial and until now missing political link that the Kingdom could use to further strengthen its

efforts towards reaching a ceasefire and eventually solve the crisis. "We are at our element," Mr. Izzeddine said.

Mr. Masri described the peace initiative as one "opening the door" for a more active Jordanian role in solving the crisis.

"We always had a role but we did not receive any positive reaction from either side. Now there is a positive move from the Iraqi side," he explained.

The information minister reiterated Jordan's continuous will to find a solution to the crisis on the basis of rejecting the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq and refusing to be part of what he described as "warmongering" by the allies.

"Jordan has always rejected the annexation of Kuwait and stood against warmongering. Now if we find any opportunity to help we will do it," he said.

He said that it was "a logical conclusion" for Iraq to tail its acceptance of the resolution with a series of conditions. "What he is saying is: If you are ready to withdraw we are ready to do that

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Arab allies of U.S. dismiss Baghdad move

ARABS IN THE anti-Iraq coalition on Friday rejected an Iraqi offer to withdraw from Kuwait as unacceptable because of conditions Baghdad had attached.

Abdullah Bishara, secretary-general of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), told reporters:

"This is not compatible with the (U.N.) Security Council resolutions. The overriding fact is that Iraq has to unconditionally and immediately withdraw from Kuwait without bargaining."

He said the Gulf war would continue until all resolutions were implemented.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, attending an eight-nation Arab conference to chart post-war Gulf security, said:

"We hope that President Saddam Hussein will change his position and not be an enemy of the entire world. Our position is that all Security Council resolutions should be implemented."

Iraq linked a withdrawal from Kuwait to a total ceasefire, removal of all foreign troops from the Gulf, an Israeli retreat from occupied Arab territory, a Syrian pullout from Lebanon and the repeal U.N. sanctions and anti-Iraqi resolutions.

News of the statement by Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) came as foreign ministers of Arab countries opposing Iraq took a recess from their Cairo conference.

The Iraqi offer was the biggest challenge yet to the cohesion of the eight Arab states — Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Several members of the coalition have come under attack from their own public for supporting an attack on Arab soil by foreign troops.

Morocco, the other Arab state with troops in the U.S.-led Gulf multinational force, declined to attend the Cairo meeting.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Esamat Abdul Meguid told the Cairo gathering that the two-day conference was called to find ways of "extricating the entire Arab and Muslim world from the historic dilemma caused by the irresponsible conduct of the Iraqi leadership."

The conference agenda has not been disclosed. Egyptian officials said major items are a post-war security structure to deter aggression, a regional ban on weapons of mass destruction and economic aid for poorer members of the coalition.

In his speech, Abdul Meguid indicated the ministers also will discuss postwar efforts to settle the Palestinian problem in peace talks with Israel.

"We assure the Palestinian people in the occupied territories that their legitimate cause was and still is our historic cause," the

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Oil prices, dollar in turmoil

LONDON (R) — Financial markets were thrown into turmoil Friday after Iraq said it was ready to withdraw conditionally from Kuwait as part of a negotiated Gulf war solution.

Oil prices plunged and then recovered while the dollar dipped initially before rising to the day's highs by early afternoon in Europe.

Share prices soared on the news but quickly retreated because the Iraqi announcement was hedged with conditions.

The price of gold dropped more than \$4 an ounce, but like the dollar and oil it bounced back.

"We've got panicking clients ringing in all the time," one oil futures broker said. "Nobody knows where prices will end."

North Sea Brent blend, the international crude oil benchmark, dropped more than \$2 to \$16.30 a barrel on first news of the 1130 GMT Iraqi announcement, but then recovered to around \$17.30 two hours later.

The dollar rose to a quoted high of 1.4790 marks and 130.35 yen in hectic trading and by 1330 GMT it had held on to its gains, standing around 1.4775 and 130.35.

Traders said foreign exchange activity was confused, with some quickly taking profits and others speculating on possible benefits

PLO official denounces Cairo meeting

TUNIS (R) — A senior PLO official said Friday the United States and not its Arab allies against Iraq would decide the post-war shape of the Middle East. "It is Washington who decides the new order based on (its) hegemony," said Executive Committee member Abdallah Hourani. Eight Arab allies in the anti-Iraq coalition met in Cairo Friday to discuss regional security after the war. (see story below) Mr. Hourani told a news conference Syria was mistaken in thinking the United States would help it recover the Golan Heights as a reward for joining the coalition. "The United States does nothing that would be contrary to Israel's interests," he said. Mr. Hourani said the eight states "want to give the impression that the game is up in the Gulf war... but the Arab man in the street is not deceived."

U.S. says war will continue

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President George Bush Friday called Iraq's offer to withdraw from Kuwait a "cruel hoax" and urged Iraqis to overthrow their leader.

Mr. Bush said the allies will continue to wage war until Iraq agrees to unconditionally withdraw its troops from Kuwait.

"There will be no linkage to other problems in the area," Mr. Bush told reporters.

Mr. Bush was reacting to an announcement Friday by Iraq that it was willing to pull out of Kuwait. However the statement also linked Iraq's withdrawal with the departure of allied forces from the Gulf and Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories.

"When I first heard that statement I must say I was happy that Saddam Hussein had seemed to realise that he must now withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait in keeping with the relevant United Nations resolu-

tions," Mr. Bush said. "Regrettably, the Iraq statement now appears to be a cruel hoax dashing the hopes of the people in Iraq and, indeed, around the world."

Bush said the Iraqi statement had led to celebrations in the streets of Baghdad, and said that showed the desire of the people to see the war ended. He said the way for that to happen was for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to order his forces out of Kuwait — or for Iraqis to oust their leader.

"... There's another way for the bloodshed to stop," Mr. Bush said. "And that's for the Iraqi military, and the Iraqi people, to take matters into their own hands, to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside and to comply with the United Nations resolutions and then rejoin the family of peace loving nations."

Mr. Bush said he had conferred with key leaders of allied nations

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Soviets hail Iraqi move, await Aziz

Combined agency dispatches

SOVIET LEADERS Friday welcomed Iraq's offer to withdraw from Kuwait, differing sharply with the United States and raising the possibility of a division between the superpowers over ending the Gulf war.

President Mikhail Gorbachev's spokesman, Vitaly Ignatenko, said the "report from Iraq was received with satisfaction and hope in Moscow."

Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh said the offer "opens up a new stage in the development of the conflict," according to the state news agency TASS. He said Soviets expect to get more information about the offer from Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, who meets Mr. Gorbachev in Moscow Monday.

The Soviet Union has been at the forefront of efforts to end the Gulf war in recent days, holding meetings with Iraqi, Iranian and Kuwaiti officials in Moscow and the Middle East.

The upbeat Soviet response was the opposite reaction of U.S. President George Bush, who called the Iraqi offer "a cruel hoax."

Soviet officials repeatedly have insisted that Iraq fulfill all U.N. resolutions on the crisis. But in meeting with Kuwaiti leaders, Soviet leaders also have expressed

ed hope for a Palestinian settlement.

Soviet diplomats have tapped decades of cooperation with Arab countries in their recent push to mediate the conflict. The Kremlin in the past has supplied Iraq with fighter jets, Scud missiles and other weapons, and had several hundred military advisers in the country until recently.

Mr. Aziz, is expected in Moscow Sunday. Soviet officials are looking forward to the meeting "with impatience," Mr. Ignatenko said.

Mr. Bessmertnykh said he expected Mr. Aziz to clarify Iraq's offer during the talks. "Most probably, a final conclusion (about the offer) will be made after talks with him," he said.

On the whole, "everything looks rather encouraging," Mr. Bessmertnykh said, according to TASS.

At the Foreign Ministry, Mr. Bessmertnykh met Friday with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. Both men said they needed to study Iraq's announcement.

"But this is our hope to bring peace to the region, in (Soviet-Iranian) cooperation together, and also with other countries in the region and all countries involved directly or indirectly,"

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Shamir 'dreams' of Israel from the river to the sea

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Yitzhak Shamir said Friday he would carry his dream of permanent Israeli control of the occupied West Bank into any post-war peace talks.

"This is my personal belief and my dream," Mr. Shamir said when asked if he wanted an Israel which swept from the Mediterranean sea to the Jordan River.

"But I am committed to negotiate with our Arab neighbours and I will negotiate if they will come to the table," Mr. Shamir told the British Broadcasting Corporation shortly before Iraq made its conditional offer to withdraw from Kuwait.

Among Iraq's conditions was that Israel must withdraw from occupied Arab territories.

Mr. Shamir reiterated his refusal to deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and suggested the 1.75 million Palestinians of the West Bank

and Gaza Strip might be satisfied with less than full independence.

Mr. Shamir also said that he expects Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to be deposed and that peace cannot come while President Saddam is a Middle East leader.

Mr. Shamir was asked on BBC Television if President Saddam should be deposed.

"I think it will be so," he replied.

To the question if there could be Middle East peace if President Saddam comes out alive, the premier said: "It is not a question if he will be alive or not. The question is that he couldn't be a leader of a country in the area."

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens contended Friday that Iraq's offer to withdraw from Kuwait was a sign its military resolve was weakening.

"I think this is the first indications that Saddam Hussein is

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Security Council holds private consultations on Iraqi step

Combined agency dispatches

THE U.N. SECURITY Council postponed a scheduled debate on a Gulf war Friday so members could meet privately to discuss Iraq's conditional offer of a withdrawal from Kuwait.

The council Thursday began a week-long formal meeting on Gulf crisis, its first since the war broke out. Iraq's ambassador gave no hint of an intention to offer a withdrawal in the council.

The council started private consultations at 1700 GMT on Iraq's announcement of its readiness to consider withdrawal from Kuwait. Formal debate was due to resume at 2030 GMT.

was scheduled to hear more than a dozen speakers, including all European Community members, and some non-aligned nations such as Malaysia and Pakistan who are uneasy about the heavy bombing.

Iraq's leadership announced it was willing to withdraw from Kuwait, raising hopes that the Gulf war might soon be over. The announcement was

hedged with conditions, linkage to the Arab-Israeli dispute and an allied troop pullout from the Gulf.

Western members on the council are likely to object to a comprehensive ceasefire if it implies linkage of any sort with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Cuba and Yemen are expected to fight for negotiations and a ceasefire.

The council resolutions adopted against Iraq call for an unconditional withdrawal and any notion of conditions is expected to be opposed.

Kuwait's U.N. ambassador, Mohammad Abul Hasan, greeted the announcement from Baghdad with extreme scepticism. U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar told reporters he was still studying Baghdad's statement.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar has already formed a task force for possible U.N. involvement after the war ends. In his unsuccessful talks with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein on Jan. 13, he offered to send peace-keeping forces to the region monitor any withdrawal of Iraqi troops.

Mr. Abul Hassan told Cable News Network (CNN) television that Iraq needed to accept all the Security Council resolutions, not just Resolution 660, adopted on Aug. 2, which calls for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from the emirate.

China Thursday called the reports of civilian casualties and massive destruction caused by allied raids in Iraq "extremely grave" and offered its own plan for achieving a peaceful solution.

The debate was the first on the war by the 15-member council.

The council adjourned Thursday night after 3½ hours of debate.

Thursday's session was closed at the insistence of the United States, Britain and other countries who said the spectacle of a noisy debate and criticism of allied tactics would encourage Iraq.

A transcript of Thursday's meeting was to be made available Friday. Normally, the United Nations gives a detailed running account while the meeting is under way.

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Iraq offers to make peace with just solution

HERE IS the text of the Iraqi communiqué issued by the Revolutionary Command Council Friday and translated from the Arabic by the Associated Press:

From the moment the United States, and America's allies in the Western colonialist countries realised that there is a force taking shape in a Muslim Arab country, Iraq, a force capable of balancing out the Zionist hegemony supported by imperialism in the region, a free force, honourable and sincerely bent on confronting Zionist aggression and schemes and rejecting imperialist domination of the area, from that moment the United States, Zionism and all the colonialist powers which hate the Arabs and the Muslims, launched a smear campaign against Iraq in order to prevent the emergence and the growth of this power and to isolate, besiege and punish Iraq because it has crossed the border drawn by the United States, Zionism and colonialist powers for the region's countries.

The years 1988 and 1989 witnessed incessant campaigns in the press and the news media, by U.N. officials and colonialist countries in order to pave the way for achieving their malicious objectives.

In 1990, these campaigns escalated feverishly and speedily. The purpose was clear to us and for all true Arabs and Muslims, and for all free people who believe in freedom and justice in the world to return the balance of power in the region to the United States, Zionism and imperialist powers to a situation that had existed for several decades and prevented the Arabs from regaining their rights and the usurped and occupied territories in Palestine, the Golan (Heights) and Lebanon.

It also prevented the realisation of the aspirations of the Arab Nation for renaissance, progress and justice which would have enabled the Arabs to take the natural place they deserve in the world because of their glorious history and great contribution to human civilisation.

During the first months of 1990, these campaigns escalated, expanded and took on a historic nature, with daily exhortations to hit Iraq and liquidate its leadership and deprive it of the means of awakening and progress.

The United States, together with other colonialist countries, took a series of unjust decisions and measures banning the export of anything that might contribute to Iraq's development and its scientific and industrial advancement.

These included actual economic boycott decisions, such as the cancellation of foodstuff contracts during the third month of 1990.

It also became clear that the United States was making preparations in coordination with the Zionist entity to strike at scientific and industrial installations and facilities and liquidate Iraq's nationalist and faithful leadership.

And when the United States realised that its plans, which were largely dependent on Zionist military capabilities, were not adequate to achieve its evil goals, it brought into the conspiracy its agents and lackeys from the corrupt and conspiring rulers, the enemies of God, in the region.

To these it assigned the role of weakening and exhausting Iraq's economy and subsequently bringing Iraq to the brink of economic collapse.

At the same time, the United States embarked on strengthening the network of the colonialist alliance for the purpose of establishing a U.S.-NATO political and military coalition with a view to strike at Iraq and dominate the region, once the opportunity came with the imbalance of power that occurred when the Soviet Union became preoccupied with its own internal affairs.

The events of Aug. 2 were not, in their essence and objective, the way they were portrayed by the American colonialists or as narrated by the traitor followers of

America.

They were a national uprising, patriotic and Islamic, against the conspiracy and the conspirators, an uprising against injustice and degeneration, against corruption and imperialism, Zionist and colonialist hegemony in the region, against the conspirators whose role in the imperialist-Zionist-colonialist plot had been exposed.

For this reason, the imperialist-Zionist-NATO alliance raised the curtain on its true objectives and intentions in the first hours of those events, massing armies and forces, and organising the largest and most tendentious campaign of misleading lies and treachery ever witnessed by the modern world.

This reckless and sly alliance of imperialists, Zionists and NATO recruited the United Nations in order to issue against Iraq, with unprecedented speed, a series of unjust and unprecedented resolutions.

Whereas this organisation had failed over the decades to respond to the simplest of demand by the Arab countries and to safeguard the simplest rights of the Palestinian Arabs, despite the clearness of Arab rights, it failed to respond to the violence of the tragedy endured by the struggling Palestinian people, and which also befell other Arabs, including the aggrieved people of Lebanon.

This reckless alliance imposed its will upon the world and adopted the methods of terror, extortion and bribery, and mobilised all the means of misleading lies that exist in the imperialist-Zionist-colonialist arsenal in order to pave the way for the aggression against Iraq.

O Glorious people of Iraq, O dear Arabs, O faithful Muslims.

The aggression launched against Iraq, the brave proud, struggling, faithful and patient country, has no precedent in history.

Human history in its entirety contains no such an alliance in which the United States, two other big powers and a host of other countries, whose number is 30, joined forces against Iraq, the struggling, the brave, the forbearing, whose population does not exceed 18 million.

It is an alliance of the evil, the wanton, the sly and the blasphemous against the fortress of faith and principles, against the centre of freedom and the call for justice and fairness.

For the duration of a whole month, the United States and its allies, including the Zionist entity which participated in the aggression from the beginning, launched brutal and destructive raids against the Iraqi people and against Iraq's scientific, economic, cultural and service facilities, and against religious centres and the locations of Iraq's ancient civilisation.

They unleashed unprecedented amounts of firepower and means of killing and destruction in the name of the United Nations, which they wanted to be a system of American-NATO domination of the world.

The United States and members of the unholy alliance sent their planes, which fire rockets from far away, and their long-range missiles to drop enormous amounts of bombs and explosives on women, children and old people in all Iraqi cities and villages, even the nomadic bedouin in the desert.

They purposefully hit mosques, churches, schools, hospitals and civilian factories. They also hit bridges, highways, and telephone, electricity and water centres, and irrigation dams, cultural centres and cultural monuments in the country.

They hit targets that had no relation whatsoever to the military effort or the military confrontation that they mentioned.

Their latest crime was the ugly and dirty crime of intentionally bombing a civilian shelter that killed and burned hundreds of women, children and old people.

The purpose of this reckless

aggression was very clear — the continuation of the process of destruction that they had wanted and in order to punish Iraq, the proud, free and struggling country, because it had chosen the course of freedom, independence and dignity and rejected insults, humiliation and capitulation to the wishes of colonialism and Zionism.

The United States and its allies launched a dirty and cowardly war against a proud and brave people.

The history and fate of nations are not decided through the materials possessed by those countries and ruling regimes. How many strong and rich empires fell throughout history as a result of their taking a course of evil, cowardice, injustice and degeneration?

This is the fate of the reckless America and its lowly regimes. This is the fate of Zionism and all the colonialist powers, by the will of God.

Iraq triumphed in this confrontation. It triumphed because it remained solid, courageous, faithful, dignified and strong-willed.

It triumphed because it upheld the spiritual principles and values emanating from its true religion and rich heritage.

The material losses in this battle, grave as they may be, are nothing measured against Iraq's spiritual strength and solid faith in principles, and its determination to carry on the course of advancement and progress.

O dear Iraqis,

O Muslims, believers in true Islam,

O honourable free people of the world,

On the basis of this firm and strong feeling, of this assessment of the nature of the confrontation, and in order to deprive the evil American-Zionist-NATO alliance of the opportunity to achieve its pre-planned and pre-arranged objective, and in appreciation of the Soviet initiative that was carried by the envoy of the Soviet leadership, and in consistency with the initiative offered by President Saddam Hussein on Aug. 2, 1990, the Revolutionary Command Council declares the following:

1. In order to achieve a dignified and acceptable political settlement, Iraq has decided to accept the U.N. Security Council Resolution No. 660 of 1990, including the clause related to an Iraqi withdrawal. The first step that is required to be implemented should be regarded as a guarantee on the part of Iraq in the matter of withdrawal, incumbent on the following:

A - An immediate and comprehensive cessation of land, sea and air operations.

B - If the U.N. Security Council decides from the outset to abrogate resolutions 660, 662, 661, 665, 666, 667, 669, 670, 671, 677, 678 and the consequences thereof.

Also: The abrogation of all the boycott and embargo decisions, and all the other negative resolutions and measures that were taken by some countries against Iraq, either individually or collectively, before Aug. 2, 1990, which were the real cause of the Gulf crisis, in order to restore a normal situation, as if nothing had happened, and without Iraq having to bear any negative consequences for whatever reason.

C - That the first step required from Iraq — that is the withdrawal — must be coupled with the withdrawal of the U.S. and all other forces, weapons and equipment which converged on the region's lands and seas after Aug. 2, 1990, including the weapons and equipment supplied to Iraq under the Gulf war pretext. These withdrawals are to be completed within one month of the comprehensive ceasefire.

D - That the first step demanded from Iraq, that is the withdrawal, should be linked to an Israeli pullout from occupied Palestine and other Arab territories in the Syrian Golan Heights and Lebanon, in accordance with

U.N. Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Should Israel resist, the Security Council is to apply against Israel the same measures applied against Iraq.

E - That Iraq's historic rights be guaranteed on land, in the air and on the sea in full in any political settlement.

F - That the political arrangement agreed upon be based on the wishes of the people and compatible with the exercise of authentic democracy and not on the basis of any acquired privileges of the Al Sabah family.

2. That all countries which participated or helped finance the aggression against Iraq undertake to rebuild what the aggression has destroyed, in a manner that would be compatible with the best specifications of the activities, projects and facilities that were targeted by the aggression, without Iraq being burdened with any financial liabilities.

3. That all (Iraqi) debts owed to aggressor Gulf and foreign countries by Iraq and the countries that sustained losses because of the aggression without having directly or indirectly participated in the aggression should be forgiven, and that relations be established between the rich and poor countries of the region based on justice and fairness, in a manner that would assign to the rich countries clear commitments to the quest for achieving development in the poor countries and, alleviating their economic woes, on the basis of the principle that the poor also have the right to share in the wealth of the rich ones, and that an end be put to double standards in dealing with the problems of the peoples and nations, be they double standards followed by the Security Council or on the part of one country or another.

4. Gulf countries, including Iran, should be left to undertake

Cost of war slows cleanup of oil slick

RIYADH (R) — Lack of cash is slowing the clean up of a giant oil slick which is killing marine life and threatening vital water and industrial plants along Saudi Arabia's Gulf coast, environmentalists said Friday.

David Olsen, consultant to the kingdom's Meteorology and Environmental Protection Administration (MEPA), told Reuters authorities were trying to "beg, borrow and steal" any equipment available to fight the oil.

"We have all kinds of plans but not enough equipment. It's hard to get the money to fund the operation right now... there's a real shortage of funds because of the war," he said.

The U.S.-led allies accused Iraq of deliberately spilling the oil into the Gulf. Baghdad said allied bombing of oil production facilities in Kuwait and southern Iraq caused the spills.

Bankers and diplomats say Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, wants to borrow more than \$3 billion from foreign banks to ease cash flow problems.

Netanyahu: Israel will be able to resist peace pressures

TEL AVIV (AP) — Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday that Israel's standing has been strengthened by the Gulf war, and that it will be able to resist American or European pressure in post-war peace efforts.

"I expect certain pressures (after the war)," he said. "But I think that the counter pressure and the influence that we can exert in the U.S. administration and outside of it are not meaningless."

Mr. Netanyahu's remarks came in response to a public tiff between the allies over \$400 million in housing loan guarantees Israel requested from the United States for the settlement of immigrants.

The guarantees have been held up for months because Washington wants stronger assurances that the thousands of Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel will not be settled in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In an unusual step, Israel went public with its dissatisfaction this week and in media interviews had its ambassador to Washington, Zalman Shoval, accuse the U.S. administration of foot-dragging.

Mr. Shoval was summoned Thursday night by an angry U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, but stuck to his guns after the meeting.

"This subject was first brought up many months ago and has not yet been implemented, even

though Israel has responded to all the questions, to all the demands," Mr. Shoval told Israel Radio Friday. He said he did not receive an explanation for the delay.

Israeli analyst Eytan Gilboa said the Israelis are angry because they feel they should be rewarded for not retaliating against Iraqi missile attacks. The United States has asked Israel to hold off, fearing strike would alienate Arab countries in the American-led anti-Iraq coalition.

"The United States experts Israel to sit quietly concerning aid, diplomacy and military responses. The Israelis don't accept this," said Mr. Gilboa, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

But Jack Brooks, an aide to U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, said the Israelis err if they expect the Americans to forget all problems of the past as a reward for Israeli restraint.

"The Israeli public is deluding itself in a big way if it believes that... a few phone calls lately between (Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Shamir and (U.S. President George) Bush have erased a long period of friction, that a basket of presents is waiting for Israel after the war," Brooks told the Israeli newspaper Maariv.

Mr. Gilboa said the Americans apparently want to postpone aid payments to Israel until the end of the Gulf war to increase their leverage over the Jewish state.

the necessary security arrangements and regulate relations among themselves, away from any foreign intervention.

5. The proclamation of the Gulf as a region free of foreign military bases and any kind of military intervention, with everybody's commitment to it.

This is our word, and we have declared and confirmed it clearly to the world and promulgated it upon the pretentious traitors and their imperialist masters, with our fundamental guarantee, after reliance on God, the One and Only, remaining to be our great Iraqi people and the brave and struggling armed forces, and on those who have faith in the course we are following in the confrontation against injustice and the unjust.

Victory against the unjust is assured in the coming days, exactly as it had been assured in days past. Allahu Akbar and shame to the shameless.

Builder of Baghdad hotel denies U.S. claim

STOCKHOLM (R) — The builder of Baghdad's Al Rashid Hotel, which the United States says houses an underground military command centre, said Friday no such room was built into the hotel and it would have been difficult to add one later.

Folke Eneroth, of the Swedish construction firm Skanska AB, said the hotel was built with an air raid shelter common to large buildings and was reinforced against terrorist attack.

But he said in a telephone interview: "It is far from a bomb-proof bunker."

"It is equipped the same way as if it were a Swedish hotel, and I don't expect that Swedish hotels are equipped with military command centres," he said.

Text of Resolution 660

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Following is the full text of United Nations Security Council Resolution 660, which Iraq was reported on Friday as being ready to implement.

The resolution, calling for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops, was passed on Aug. 2 — the day of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait:

The Security Council:

ALARMED by the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 by the military forces of Iraq; DETERMINING that there exists a breach of international peace and security as regards the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; ACTING under articles 39 and

40 of the Charter of the United Nations;

1. Condemns the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait;

2. Demands that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions in which they were located on Aug. 1, 1990;

3. Calls upon Iraq and Kuwait to begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolutions of their differences and supports all efforts in this regard, and especially those of the Arab League;

4. Decides to meet again as necessary to consider further steps to ensure compliance with this resolution.

Hafr Al Batin suffers Iraqi missile attacks

HAFR AL BATIN, Saudi Arabia (AP) — This city had been left but abandoned by its residents due to its proximity to the Kuwaiti border. But its dusty streets bustled with soldiers Thursday when two rapid explosions followed by a loud, crashing blast shook the area.

Two Scuds had arrived. The falling chunks of debris rained down on an auto repair shop and an apartment building. Three businesses lost their roofs and windows for blocks around shattered.

Kalyan Bose, 41, whose house was virtually destroyed in the blast, said he was watching television with his wife and child when the air-raid warning signal came on screen.

Moments later, his home was showered with debris.

"The window flew out in front of my face," he said. Flying glass cut his foot deeply, but Mr. Bose was relieved that his family was in the only room not destroyed by the attack.

No deaths were reported, but four people were injured, Saudi officials said.

Mr. Bose's house was the closest structure to the wrecked auto-repair shop.

The debris levelled the empty shop and ignited a huge fire. Explosions from paint and petroleum containers sent emergency crews scurrying. Debris and auto parts littered the street.

"It blew a carborator's football field away," said a U.S. soldier

who did not give his name.

Marine Brig. Gen. Richard Neal told reporters in Riyadh that no patriots were fired over Hafr Al Batin because the city is not within the missile defence shield.

He said Iraq fired two missiles at Hafr Al Batin and it "appeared that the Scuds broke up in flight." He added the missiles may have been of "lesser quality" than those that have previously hit Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Arab forces in the U.S.-led coalition are stationed at Hafr Al Batin, which is about 110 kilometres from the Kuwaiti border near a major Saudi military base. It was targeted by Iraq on Jan. 23, when one Scud was fired at the city but caused no damage.

Massive allied tank exercise are taking place north of the city. Since the Gulf war started Jan. 17, Iraq has fired more than 60 missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel. Allied warplanes have been hunting the mobile launchers used to fire the modified Scud rockets.

Most of the 50,000 residents of the city have evacuated since the war began, but it is a crossroads for soldiers from virtually all the nations serving in the coalition forces.

Saudis, Syrians, Czechs, Americans, British, French and Americans all use the town to get newspapers and groceries.

Most of those still living in the town are Asian labourers stuck there by their Saudi work contracts.

Aziz

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Velayati said.

Mr. Velayati, who was due to meet Mr. Gorbachev on Friday, arrived in Moscow only hours after the Iraqi statement.

The visit is the latest in a series of Soviet diplomatic contacts in a last-ditch effort to head off a land war in the region that could lead to thousands of casualties on both sides.

The Kremlin, under pressure from the Communist Party and sections of the military opposed to the war, sent special envoy Yevgeny Primakov to the Gulf this week for talks with Saddam.

Mr. Primakov said on his return that he noted "rays of hope" in the Iraqi position had subsequent statements by Soviet spokesmen made clear that Moscow was pinning much on the Aziz visit.

Mr. Gorbachev has expressed concern about the war escalating beyond control and that the allied forces are exceeding their U.N. mandate by wreaking unwarranted damage on Iraq.

Iraq's offer to withdraw from Kuwait contains unacceptable conditions, Luxembourg, the current president of the European Community (EC), said.

"Baghdad's comments again impose conditions on a retreat," the Luxembourg government said in a statement.

"Any conditions and any link are unacceptable," it added.

Officials said the statement expressed the views of the Luxembourg government rather than the stance of the 12-nation EC as a whole.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said Iraq's offer did not fulfil Security Council demands.

At a news conference with French President Francois Mitterrand, Mr. Kohl echoed an earlier statement by the French leader that Iraq's statement did not meet the U.N. demand for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait.

"It links a whole series of preconditions to a withdrawal," Mr. Kohl said. "Anyone who examines the conditions can see straight away this is not a reversal of the Iraqi position."

Italian Foreign Minister Gianni De Michelis said Iraq's offer set unacceptable conditions but was important as its first recognition of U.N. resolutions on the Gulf crisis.

Mr. De Michelis, who originally welcomed the Iraqi offer, said after meeting German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher in Paris Friday President Bush was right to reject it.

"Bush's statement... says what we all say: That some of the conditions imposed by Iraq are unacceptable," he told reporters.

"They were not accepted yesterday and they are not being accepted today."

He added Iraq's offer should not be underestimated, as it was the first time Baghdad had recognised the validity of U.N. resolutions demanding its withdrawal from Kuwait.

"It is a success for the U.N. and the coalition."

Mr. De Michelis, who is to fly to Moscow Saturday as a member of the EC "troika" of foreign ministers, said they were arranging a meeting with Mr. Bessmertnykh but had no plans to meet Mr. Aziz.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

05:56 Fajr
06:14 (Sunrise) Duha
11:50 Dhuhr
14:57 'Asr
17:26 Maghrib
18:43 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifflah, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Ternassia Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel.

62543, Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654952

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Clouds will increase gradually and there will be a drop in temperatures. Rains are expected to fall in the northern and central parts of the country. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Min./max. temp. 5/15
Aqaba 10/23
Deserts 4/17
Jordan Valley 11/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 18, Aqaba 26. Humidity readings: Amman 36 per cent, Aqaba 10 per cent.

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Hafez Khawaja 791954
Dr. Jamal Abu Baker 746626
Dr. Mafred Tannous 864480
Dr. Othman Mustafa 774024
Firas pharmacy 661912

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 637111
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 943022
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 63101
Repairs 63101
Abdali Telephone Repair 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Amn. 642816
Abdali Maternity, J. Amn. 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine Shmeisani 6641714
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 6672719
Al-Musader Hospital 666127/57
Al-Jalali, Abdali 6641646

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple 550 / 480
Banana 500 / 450
Banana (Mishmar) 450 / 400

MARKET PRICES

Beans 550 / 450
Cabbage 80 / 40
Carrot 200 / 150
Cauliflower 300 / 250
Cucumbers (large) 140 / 100
Cucumbers (small) 260 / 220
Dates 500 / 400
Eggplant 200 / 150
Garlic 1600 / 1400
Lemon 180 / 140
Marrow (large) 160 / 100
Marrow (small) 340 / 270
Onion (dry) 270 / 240
Onion (green) 180 / 128
Okra 600 / 500
Orange 200 / 150
Pepper (hot) 360 / 320
Pepper (sweet) 200 / 120
Potato 180 / 120
Radish 100 / 50
Sage 400 / 300
Spinach 120 / 80
Tomatoes 180 / 140

on 660

1 suffer
attack



GET WELL SOON: His Majesty King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday visited one of the Jordanian drivers injured in the allied air raid on oil tanker trucks transporting crude oil from Baghdad. The injured driver, Majid Salem Qawid, is undergoing treatment at Al Khafid Hospital in Amman. The King and Queen also visited German student Andreas Muesfeldt (photo above) who was attacked by a demonstrator in Amman following Wednesday's allied bombing raid on a Baghdad shelter. The 28-year-old student has been studying Arabic at the University of Jordan.

Germany grants Jordan \$105m

By Mariam M. Shalhin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher ended a five-hour trip to Jordan Thursday afternoon, pledging an aid package of 150 million marks (\$105 million) to Jordan, in part to compensate for the \$2 billion in losses the country suffered from the Gulf crisis.

During meetings with His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Genscher voiced support for Jordan's delicate political and economic situation resulting from the ongoing Gulf war.

"We are interested that Jordan maintains its stability in these difficult circumstances," the German foreign minister told a joint press conference with Crown Prince Hassan.

"Jordan is a stable country and we would like to see it remain as such," Genscher said after announcing that Germany would grant Jordan 150 million marks in addition to the 180 million marks it granted Jordan in late 1990.

The aid was granted to help ease the country's economic difficulties. Many Jordanians and other Arabs have recently criticised Germany for a 1 billion mark (\$660 million) package of military and economic aid to Israel.

The aid to Israel, German government officials argue, was an attempt to quell Israel's anger against Germany for its role in ending Iraq.

The German foreign minister stressed that a solution to the region's ills, and a framework for restoring the post war relations and infrastructure, "must come from within the region and should not be imposed from outside powers."

The European Community, he said, would contribute to a lasting settlement that would solve outstanding regional



NEXT MOVE: Seeking a peaceful solution to the Gulf war engages His Majesty King Hussein in an outdoor talk with Germany's foreign minister.

issues like the Palestine problem. Germany had taken it upon itself to aid countries that have suffered economically from Gulf countries, of the so-called front-line states, of Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Turkey, Genscher said.

Genscher visited Egypt and Syria before finishing up his three-country Mideast tour in Amman. Germany also had pledged 190 million marks to aid Egyptian economy.

Genscher said Germany's position on resolving the Gulf crisis has not changed.

"The key to the ending of hostilities in the Gulf would be a withdrawal by Iraqi forces from Kuwait," he said.

"It is in the hands of Saddam Hussein to end this war by withdrawing his troops from Kuwait," he said at the press conference.

Crown Prince Hassan told reporters that Jordan had respected international legitimacy and had adhered to United Nations Security resolutions throughout the crisis. He said Jordan had, in light of the many civilian casualties in Iraq, called on the president of the Security Council to consider calling for a ceasefire.

"It is only through the cessation of hostilities that effectively that political movement can be envisaged," the Crown Prince said. "The longer the fighting continues the more bitter the situation becomes, the more poisoned the atmosphere politically," he added.

Referring to Arab reaction to the killing of civilian Iraqis, Prince Hassan said, "there is no

contradiction between conscience and legitimacy. People are angry at the continuation of the war. They yearn for an end of hostilities, but it is our feeling that this can only come through everyone concerned with ceasing hostilities so that we can move to the implementation of U.N. resolutions."

"It is impossible to talk of a political solution to this crisis at this late stage by what will be seen very clearly in Iraq, in particular given the events of the last 24 hours as capitulation," the Crown Prince said.

Voicing hope that Jordan may have a role to play in an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, Genscher said, "I hope that the Jordanian leadership will use its possibilities to convince Saddam Hussein that it is his duty to end this war by withdrawing from Kuwait."

The German foreign minister also met with Prime Minister Mudar Badran, Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri and other senior government officials during his visit. Before leaving for Germany, the foreign minister thanked King Hussein, as well as the Crown Prince and Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri for joining him in his visit of a 27-year-old hospitalised German student.

The student had been stabbed by an enraged Jordanian after pictures of Iraqi civilian casualties were aired on Jordanian television Wednesday.

I'm satisfied he is receiving excellent medical care here, and I thank Their Majesties for joining me in wishing him all the best," he said at Marka airport before he departed.

Ortega initiative wins positive Iraqi response

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The announcement by Iraq Friday of its readiness to withdraw its forces from Kuwait represents the first phase of an initiative proposed by an international group, according to former Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

"We are in fact pleasantly surprised at the quick response that our initiative has drawn from Baghdad," said Mr. Ortega, shortly after addressing a press conference where he announced the initiative of the International Movement for Peace.

"The Iraqi declaration of its willingness to withdraw from Kuwait has come in implementation of our initiative," he said, and referred to a specific part of the initiative, a copy of which was distributed at the press conference.

The document says, "... As a contribution to peace, Iraq announces its acceptance of this proposal for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. This would imply that, as a first step, Iraq intends to initiate a process of solution to the situation in Kuwait..."

The Iraqi announcement, contained in a statement from the ruling Revolutionary Council (RCC) issued Friday noon, made no direct reference to the initiative unveiled in Amman. But sources close to Mr. Ortega said the plan was carried to Baghdad earlier this week by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and had won approval from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"The Iraqi announcement, in fact, uses some of the language we used in our initiative," said one of the sources, referring to a phrase in the Iraqi statement that says Iraq's "readiness (to withdraw from Kuwait) is the first step needed to be implemented as an undertaking on the part of Iraq on the issue of withdrawal, linked with a full and comprehensive ceasefire on land, air and sea and that the U.N. Security Council resolves to withdraw all the resolutions issued by it."

"The RCC indicated that the first step requested from the Iraqi side regarding the issue of withdrawal should also be linked to

Israel's withdrawal from Palestine and the Arab territories it is occupying in the Golan Heights and Lebanon in implementation of the Security Council and the United Nations."

The Iraqi position that its withdrawal from Kuwait was contingent on the departure from the Gulf of the American-led multinational forces and Israeli pullout from occupied Arab territories is compatible with the initiative announced by Mr. Ortega, who is also calling for a solution to the Cypriot problem.

The former Nicaraguan president, who visited Baghdad at least three times for talks with President Saddam since October, has the support of Jordan, Algeria, Cyprus, Yemen, Libya, Zambia, the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Holy See in addition to British Labour left-wing leader Tony Benn and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit, who read out the initiative at the press conference.

"The Iraqi position that it did not want this war and was ready to discuss the issue of Kuwait had been made clear to us," Mr. Ortega told the Jordan Times. "But obviously the American administration did not want peace and hence the deadlock and war," he said.

Latia Bishop of Amman Saleem Al Sayegh told Friday's press conference that Pope John Paul II had endorsed the initiative and had sent a message to the International Movement for Peace expressing his "support and encouragement of all your initiatives to achieve just peace in the Middle East region and to put an end to the war in the Gulf, the massacre of the innocents and the violation of human dignity..."

The initiative, which implied that there was some form of American encouragement, states the U.N. Charter and international legitimacy should be the guidelines to resolve all problems.

At the same time, Mr. Ortega said, "there cannot be any selective application of international law."

The six-point proposal calls on the Security Council to authorise the secretary-general, "in coordination with the government of Iraq," to announce "his readiness

to dispatch U.N. observers to witness the implementation process" of the solution launched with Baghdad's announcement of its intention to withdraw from Kuwait.

"Remaining territorial disputes between Iraq and Kuwait must be settled in accordance with the rules of international law and through mutually agreed (modalities) of dispute settlement," it says.

The initiative envisages the departure of all foreign forces deployed in the Gulf since the Aug. 2 Iraq invasion of Kuwait "as soon as the peace process begins, and... in a time frame not exceeding that of their deployment."

It also calls for an end to all economic sanctions and other punitive measures against Iraq with immediate effect as soon as the process begins and Security Council guarantees that Iraq will not be attacked during or after the process.

It also proposes that the Security Council adopt a resolution demanding immediate implementation of all U.N. resolutions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to impose sanctions against the Jewish state if it fails to abide by them. In addition, it calls for measures to protect the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories as well as the Islamic and Christian holy places there.

The fifth point in the proposal calls for convening an international peace conference on the Middle East conflict "in order to establish comprehensive peace and security in the region and enable the Palestinian people to exercise (their) national rights, including the right of return, self-determination and independence on their national and ancestral soil."

The final point is a call for "regional and international arrangements" to solve the "underlying economic, social, political and security problems of the area, including the need to declare the Middle East area a zone free of mass destruction weapons, to uphold the principle of the rule of law in international relations and the need also to set in motion confidence-building measures that would pave the way for total disarmament."

U.S. massacre of Iraqis draws fire from senators

AMMAN (J.T.) — The allied raid on a civilian shelter in Baghdad dominated a session in the Upper House of Parliament Thursday which was chaired by Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi.

Speakers at the session unanimously condemned the continued allied aggression on Iraq in general but singled out Wednesday's raid on the shelter.

Hosni Ayyesh compared the raid with the massacres committed by U.S. agents in Lebanon

and Palestine and with the massacres of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Kamel Sharif described the attack as the most brutal and the ugliest crime committed by the U.S. on the Arab people.

Wednesday's massacre, he said, clearly reflects the new world order sought by American President George Bush.

Among the other parliament speakers who poured scorn on

the attack were Nawaf Al Qadi, Daoud Hanania, Mohammad Rasool Kilani, Amin Shuqair and Barjas Al Hadid. They attacked Security Council resolutions which they said gave allied forces a free hand to kill innocent people in Iraq.

They also said that after failing to confront the Iraqi military on the ground, the allied forces are using air power to vent their frustration on a defenceless population.

Ali graduates JTV-trained police information officers

AMMAN (J.T.) — The training centre at Jordan Television (JTV) has today sent out a batch of graduates of police officers working for the Public Security Department (PSD).

PSD Director-General Fadel Ali attended the graduation ceremony Thursday and distributed diplomas to the graduates.

In an address on the occasion, Major General Ali paid tribute to the efforts being exerted by the training centre at Jordan Television and hoped for further cooperation in promoting "information services" in the Kingdom under the present crucial stage.

He said information can play a major role in serving the just causes of the Arab Nation.

Fadel Ali stressed the role of information in preserving internal security in the Kingdom during a seminar held earlier by the Arab Youth Forum.

Major General Ali referred during the seminar to a number of incidents during which infiltrators crossed the ceasefire line into occupied Palestine from Jordan. He criticised those behind such infiltrations which he said are being called part of a holy war on Israel.

Holy war is normally organised and can only be waged at proper and most convenient time and place but not through infiltrations that are bound to fail, Ali said.

With reference to the recent incidents in Ramtha where Turkish and Syrian trucks were



MABROUK: PSD Director-General Fadel Ali hands an officer, a diploma of graduation.

attacked by the local population, Fadel Ali said although the attack on the trucks was motivated by the allied air raids on Jordanian vehicles, no one has the right to take the law into his own hands.

Jordanians, he added should abide by laws and regulations; and citizens should differentiate between national patriotic feelings and chaos and disorder.

"There was no justification whatsoever for the attack on the trucks in Ramtha since by their action those involved overlooked and ignored the Jordanian government's role, something which violates the democratic way of life in Jordan," Fadel Ali noted.

With reference to the drug situation in Jordan, Fadel Ali said that the PSD's anti-narcotics unit is considered as one of the strongest in the Arab area, and its

officers are carrying their duty with the highest efficiency, not only in countering the drug trafficking operations in Jordan, but also in warning neighbouring states of the possible smuggling operations affecting them, Fadel Ali noted.

The PSD chief stressed that Jordan serves as a passage-way for smugglers who try to traffic the illicit merchandise to other countries.

He said that the most potential drug markets were located in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Gulf states.

Among those taking part in the seminar were Amman Governor Jawdat Seboul, Jordan Press Association President Hashem Khreisat and PSD officers as well as a large group representing the Arab Youth Forum.



STAINED: The placard of the American embassy in Amman shows the anger of Jordanians against the U.S. war crimes.

Masses roar at U.S. barbarism

By Serene Halasa
and Mariam Shalhin
Jordan Times Staff Reporters

AMMAN — Thousands of Jordanians took to the streets Thursday and Friday to protest the allied bombing of civilian shelters in the Ameriah district of Baghdad which reportedly left hundreds of civilians, mostly women and children dead.

The protesters also called for an end to the targeting of civilian districts in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq. Anger at the members of the American-led coalition mounted as men, women and school children took to the streets all over the Kingdom.

After Friday prayers, about four thousand protesters began a march heading towards the American embassy. During the march the protesters chanted pro-Iraqi anti-American slogans, and waved black flags mourning the hundreds of Iraqi deaths after the allied attack on the shelter in Ameriah.

The protesters were prevented from proceeding to the embassy by a barrage of riot police who clashed briefly with the demonstrators. The protesters held ground for a while and were later dispersed by the riot police.

In the northern Jordanian city of Mafrqa, about 2000 people marched through the streets waving banners calling for a strong retaliation against "criminals whose hands are stained with Iraqi blood."

Tomatoes, red paint and even shoes were hurled at the American embassy Thursday morning by angry Jordanian women who often could not control their wrath over the reports of massive civilian casualties in the Iraqi capital Wednesday.

Several women and teenage girls dipped their hands in red paint leaving red hand marks all over the wall of the American embassy. "Bush you butcher, you burned Iraqi children" was also written in red paint on the wall of the embassy. It was the first time since protests began in August that demonstrators were allowed to get close to the doorstep of the heavily guarded American embassy.

The protesters, who were later joined by men, clapped and cheered when a protester reached

the black gate of the American embassy and put a picture of the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on the gate.

The protesters also cheered a young boy who climbed over the arch-like structure in front of the American embassy and stuck two Iraqi flags on it.

There was also a large uproar when news of an Iraqi missile attack on Haifa Al Batten in Saudi Arabia was heard. "Al Hussein missiles struck Saudi Arabia," one protester shouted over a loudspeaker.

Later, protesters staged a sit-in in front of the American embassy until the early hours of the evening. The demonstrators hurled a model of an Al Hussein (Scud) missile over the wall of the embassy. Calling on the Jordanian government to arm the population, protesters chanted "give us guns so that we can give you our souls."

Demands were also made by the demonstrators for a break in diplomatic relations between Jordan and members of the American-led allied coalition.

The women, who were dressed in black, waved Iraqi flags and chanted, "no more allied flags over Jordan's skies."

Often in tears, women shouted at members of the foreign press who stood on the sidelines: "... We hope he gets back at all of you and Fahd, Mubarak and Al Assad," said one woman referring to possible retaliation by Saddam Hussein at allied powers.

Insults and curses were hurled at the heavily guarded American and Egyptian embassies at the Third Circle. "Our demands are legitimate. All we need is Arab national unity," chanted the women as they condemned Arab members of the allied coalition against Iraq.

Meanwhile, thousands of students from Al Watani and Orthodox schools marched to the United Nations headquarters in central Shmeisani to voice their protests there. American flags were burned and "wanted" posters of American president George Bush were raised "wanted for the execution of Iraqi children — dead or dead" read one placard.

Before leaving the U.N. premises one student threw a large rock at the U.N. building, breaking one of the windows.

Iranians tour military sites Algerian, Yemeni parliamentarians join in efforts to stop war

AMMAN (J.T.) — The speakers of the Algerian and Yemeni parliaments, Abdul Aziz Bel Khadem and Youssef Al Shahrar are holding talks in Amman with Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Abdul Latif Arabiyat and other Jordanian deputies.

The two visitors arrived in Amman Thursday and said the meetings would include discussions of the Gulf war and continuing allied bombing of Iraq. Upon their arrival, Khadem and Shahrar said their countries would join Jordan's efforts to stop the war.

The Yemeni and Algerian parliamentarians condemned the recent allied raids on Iraqi civilians and paid tribute to Iraq for its steadfastness.

The two parliamentarians have scheduled further talks here Saturday.

The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Arabiyat, earlier met here with members of the visiting Iranian parliamentary delegation to review the situation in the Gulf and to discuss Jordanian-Iranian parliamentary cooperation to end the war.

Arabiyat was quoted saying the U.S.-led coalition's continued aggression on Iraq is designed to

destroy the Arab and Islamic Nation.

The Jordanian people realise the dimension of this criminal plot and have adopted a clear and firm stand to protect their interests and those of the Arab and Islamic nations, Arabiyat said.

The head of the Iranian delegation, Mohammad Salamati, said the Iranian visit was a prelude to joint Jordanian-Iranian cooperation.

Salamati said a message delivered to Arabiyat contained the Iranian five-point peace plan, initiated by Iran's parliament Speaker Mehdi Karrubi.

Following the meeting in parliament, the Iranian delegation members visited the front line positions of the Fourth Royal Mechanised Division in the Jordan Valley. They also met with senior officers and troops for a military briefing.

The delegation members toured military positions at Karameh and recited verses of the Holy Koran at the Martyrs Monument near the site of the Karameh battle.

The delegation members were accompanied on the tour by parliament deputies representing the Islamic Movement.

Canada renews offer to help Jordan obtain energy supplies

AMMAN (J.T.) — Canada on Friday said it was prepared to Jordan find alternative sources of crude oil said that Ottawa understands Jordan's difficult position and the difficulties finding its energy requirements.

Canadian Ambassador Percy Rowwood met with Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Taher Al Taher in Amman to discuss mutual cooperation in energy matters.

Rowwood offered to help the Jordan find an alternative to crude oil supplies. Jordan has been considering various sources.

A meeting was arranged after Rowwood last week publicly stated his country's readiness to Jordan meet its oil needs and the country fail to find a native source.

Rowwood was quoted by the News Agency, Petra, as

saying the Canadian government would help Jordan cover any extra cost of importing crude oil from a more expensive source.

Earlier this week, it was reported that Syria had agreed to sell oil to Jordan to make up for shortfalls from Iraq. The initial purchases would be about 8,000 barrels of diesel a day at international prices. Jordan needs at least 60,000 barrels of oil every month.

A senior official earlier said that Jordan had bought a 100,000 tonne oil tanker for \$7.5 million, and that the vessel was expected to dock at Aqaba before the end of the month.

Jordan was forced to buy oil from Syria and purchase the oil tanker in the face of continued allied raids on Jordanian oil tanker trucks coming from Baghdad.

The air assaults resulted in the death and injury of scores of drivers and other civilians.

Habib condoles churches

AMMAN (Petra) — Church leaders received a cable of condolence from Secretary-General of the Middle East Council of Churches, Kibrial Habib Thursday. In his cable Habib voiced deep regret over the killing of Jordanian civilians in U.S.-led bombing.

Habib also pledged council support for the Jordanian people in their grief and suffering over the killing of Iraqi civilians.

Habib said he hoped for a peaceful end to the war and said it would pave the way for resolving other regional problems with dialogue.

Habib sent a similar cable to church leaders in Iraq, expressing his deep sorrow over the shelling of hundreds of civilians who died Wednesday in a Baghdad shelter.

"This tragic event is another evidence of the dire need for an immediate ceasefire in the hostilities and for initiating dialogue to achieve a peaceful settlement to the Gulf crisis and other regional problems in the Middle East," the cable said.

Gulf war stretches Muslim Djiboutis' French allegiances

By Aidan Hartley
Reuters

DJIBOUTI—The tough-looking foreign legionnaire, machine gun in hand, holds open the door of a school bus and gently delivers French children to their home. Squatting beneath some nearby trees, a group of Djiboutians looks on impassively, their mouths full of qat — a narcotic that inspires lassitude. In the distance, a mosque calls the faithful to prayer. There are some 4,000 French troops and 7,000 French civilians based in the strategic port of Djibouti, capital of the tiny republic of the same name on the Bab El Mandeb straits of the Red Sea. "Our job is to protect the country and my forces against terrorist attacks or attacks on the sea," said General Claude Gautier, commander of the French forces in Djibouti, a former French territory. Western diplomats dismiss a rumour that Iraqi aircraft have bases in Yemen, just 30 kilometres away across the Red Sea, but say the government might use such rumours as a pretext to give French forces wider powers. President Hassan Gouled April-

don has openly backed the U.S.-led alliance against Iraq, but the defence pact signed at the country's independence in 1977 does not allow French forces to launch a military attack from Djibouti. Even if Djibouti's airbase, port or military hospital are not used directly, the city expects to play host to thousands of allied troops on leave from the Gulf. But as elsewhere in the Muslim world, the Djibouti government's support for the coalition fighting Iraq appears to stand in contrast to popular sentiments among the half-million population. Demonstrations against the Gulf war were banned on Jan. 20 after six people were injured in a struggle with the police. "Since the war started, feelings at the grassroots level have swung in favour of Saddam Hussein and against the French and Americans here," one young Djiboutian said. On Thursday (Jan. 24) the government charged a number of people in connection with an alleged coup plot which it said originated among the Afars, Djibouti's second-biggest ethnic group after the Isas (Somalis). Without the French, this nation could not survive in the politically

volatile Horn of Africa. Ethiopia and Somalia both looked jealously on Djibouti at independence but Djibouti sought military protection from France as the former colonial power. Legend says that when the French arrived in 1856, they found little more than a sickly goat under a withered thorn tree. Today, with the best port facilities in Africa north of South Africa's Durban, Djibouti is a transit point for shipping to French territories in the Indian Ocean and hosts a military air-base. But being so near the Gulf and the mouth of the Red Sea has raised the question of what role it will play in the war against Iraq. Many ordinary Djiboutians feel their mainly Muslim country has become a "backyard" for French and allied military operations in the Gulf war. It is a charge Foreign Minister Moumin Bahdon Farah is at pains to deny. "If we have accepted to give facilities to multinational forces, it only means we have made an independent decision to oppose the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait," he says.

General Gautier said his forces could help troops in transit to the Gulf, and provide training in the desert. In September last year, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a grenade attack in the port's red light district killed a French boy and injured 17 other people. A pro-Iraqi group calling itself the "Movement for Djibouti Youth" claimed responsibility for the bombing and promised to kill more French, English and Americans. But no further attacks on foreigners have occurred. In the Saigon bar shaven-headed legionnaires, their tattooed arms around the shoulders of Ethiopian prostitutes, are served cocktails by Vietnamese waitresses. From the historic Hamoudi Mosque a few streets away, staunch local Muslims view the fleshpots with moral outrage. But in return for hosting the French and allied forces Djibouti's government hopes for economic rewards, diplomats say. "The first feelings of recession here came in 1990 when the poverty of Ethiopia and war in Somalia began to starve our trade," said Souh Hussein Omar, a senior commerce official.

Egyptian public uneasy with Kuwaitis' recklessness

By Ashraf Fouad
Reuters

CAIRO—While 35,000 Egyptian soldiers serve in the Gulf multinational force fighting to drive Iraq out of occupied Kuwait, a wealth gap is causing friction between Egyptians and some of the 30,000 Kuwaiti exiles sheltering here. A schoolyard spat between 12-year-olds at a Cairo school illustrated some of the tensions. Parents said Kuwaiti children wrote on a wall "Egyptian plus foul fava beans equals donkey." Egyptian pupils responded by scribbling "Kuwaiti minus oil equals dog." Some Egyptians have dubbed the Kuwaitis "five-star refugees" because of the luxurious lifestyle financed partly by their oil rich government-in-exile. After reports that young Kuwaitis were partying in Cairo nightspots, Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdel Razak Al Kandari went on Egyptian television last month to apologise for any violation of Egypt's generous hospitality by a minority of his compatriots. "Not all Kuwaitis are angels.

Thank God the majority has risen to the level of the tragedy we are passing through," Kandari said in an interview. The Egyptian government has warmly welcomed the exiles. State television often carries patriotic Kuwaiti music and broadcasts encouraging solidarity with occupied Kuwait at prime time. But the arrogance among some of the wealthy exiles, reflected in offhand comments widely circulating in Cairo, has irritated Egyptians. "You (Egyptian soldiers) are not in the Gulf for free, we pay every man," is one of many remarks attributed to Kuwaitis by angry Egyptians. Many Kuwaitis in Egypt, one of the poorer Arab states, live in luxury hotels and apartments while they wait for allied forces to liberate their emirate. Kuwaitis once enjoyed one of the world's highest per capita incomes. At the time of the invasion their government controlled some \$100 billion in foreign investments. It has contributed about \$18.5 billion to the multinational troops. "They are arrogant and will treat us even worse once they return home," said Magdy, a

Western-educated Egyptian engineer. Another Egyptian quoted a Kuwaiti as saying proudly: "Thank God we are not poor like the Palestinians. We are paying the Americans, the Egyptians and everyone else to liberate Kuwait." Ambassador Kandari said several U.S. television networks had broadcast damaging pictures of Kuwaitis dancing the night away after the war to liberate their emirate started on Jan. 17. "It is not a phenomenon, it's marginal. Just a very small percentage of Kuwaitis might have done wrong and we (the embassy) keep advising our people how to behave," he said. Alcohol and disco dancing were banned in conservative Muslim Kuwait before the invasion. "We are looking for perfection and that is difficult. We want all Kuwaitis to abide by the rules of hospitality and respect Egyptian laws and feelings," Kandari said. He said the embassy had created training programmes to fill the time of young

Kuwaitis in Egypt and stop them from "harming our reputation and cause." Hatem, like some Egyptian landlords, felt sorry for Kuwaitis made homeless by Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion and offered one family a free furnished flat. He said he evicted them after overhearing his Kuwaiti tenant tell a friend on the telephone: "By God, we have lived to see the day when (Egyptian) beggars give us refuge." President Hosni Mubarak has stressed that Egypt's stand in the Gulf crisis was one of principle not dictated by financial needs or promises of aid. Diplomats said Kuwait's exiled rulers have granted Egypt some \$50 million to help Egyptians fleeing Kuwait and promised to make up for lost belongings and Egyptian accounts in Kuwaiti banks once the emirate was liberated. There were about 230,000 Egyptians in Kuwait and many have collected \$400 in immediate Kuwaiti aid while others flock to the embassy in Cairo every day to sign up to return to the emirate to participate in its reconstruction.

Jordan

(Continued from page 1)

too." But the minister added that the conditions show that "there has to be more elaboration." "This is what a ceasefire means," he added. The Iraqi president "laid down his thinking and there has to be more discussion." Mr. Izzeddine said that Jordan viewed the initiative in three major contexts. "We welcome it, we call on all countries to react positively and we see it as an opening for peace." Mr. Masri said that the Iraq move should be capitalised on particularly by the United Nations Security Council members. He said the initiative voiced Iraq's readiness to cooperate in implementing Resolution 660, which calls for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, "in a serious effort to achieve an acceptable, honourable and political solution." The foreign minister stressed the major role the European countries can play in reaching a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis and called for prompt actions to arrange a ceasefire in preparation for peace based on dialogue. Mr. Masri placed special emphasis on the scheduled meeting between Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz and Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh on Sunday. He said the U.S.-Soviet statement on Jan. 30 could serve as a good basis for the talks between the two ministers. He noted that the Iraqi statement was in harmony with the diplomatic efforts being made by many parties, particularly the Non-Aligned Movement, and other countries, which called for applying the same standards when implementing international legitimacy.

Shamir

(Continued from page 1)
beginning to understand that he is in bad shape," Arens told Israeli

Television. Asked if Israel feared Iraq may survive with its military might in tact, Mr. Arens said: "I don't think that at the end of this war, Iraq will have the same war machine it had at the start." Mr. Arens also said Israel, which has been attacked 12 times by Iraqi Scud missiles, would maintain its vigilance. He declined to discuss the specifics of Iraq's offer until Israeli officials had time to study the text. Mr. Arens also criticised State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler for announcing that the last Iraqi missile attack struck his neighbourhood. Mr. Arens was in a meeting with Secretary of State James Baker during Tuesday's missile attack. He left the room to call his wife. Ms. Tutwiler later told reporters the missile had hit Mr. Arens' neighbourhood. "I must say that I am sorry that the State Department spokeswoman reported this to the press," Mr. Arens told Israeli Television. "It was heard all over the world, including Baghdad, and she shouldn't have done this." He added that it threatened his security and that of Israel. Military censors have banned publication of the location of missile hits, saying it could help Iraq aim its Scuds.

Bush

(Continued from page 1)

and that the war will continue until there is an unconditional withdrawal. At the U.S. Defence Department, a senior analyst said there was no evidence that Iraq's army was pulling back. "We have seen no indication of any kind of Iraqi withdrawal," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater said U.S. officials

felt "disappointment" that Iraq is again trying to raise the hopes of (its) own people and others around the world, with no willingness to back it up. There's no concrete actions in here. There's really nothing to lead us to believe (Iraq) is going to pull out of Kuwait."

The call marked a dramatic departure from Mr. Bush's remarks throughout the crisis. White House officials said the call reflected "growing frustration" with Iraq's refusal to bow to round-the-clock allied bombing and leave Kuwait. The call also echoed remarks Mr. Bush made in his showdown with Panama's strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega. In that case, Mr. Bush urged a military coup and then sent U.S. troops into Panama in December 1989 and had Mr. Noriega arrested and brought back to the United States to face drug-trafficking charges. The White House has repeatedly stated that the removal of President Saddam was not one of the official aims of the 28-nation Western-Arab coalition fighting Iraq. Mr. Bush said the massive allied offensive against Iraqi military targets would continue, and spokesman Fitzwater said the Baghdad peace plan may have been offered as a delaying tactic. "There's no change in the military conflict and there's not been any different instructions given to our military," Mr. Fitzwater told reporters. There has been speculation that the massive air war that has gone on for more than four weeks now may change to a ground offensive soon. Mr. Bush earlier in the week said he decided to continue the bombing missions "for a while" but preparations have been going ahead for a ground war.

Gulf

(Continued from page 1)
Jewish state the same sanctions it applied against Iraq. Shortly after the RCC state-

ment was read over the radio, Baghdad residents fired their rifles and pistols in the air, in a traditional sign of celebration.

The RCC statement said: "In order to achieve a dignified and acceptable political settlement, the Revolutionary Command Council has decided to accept U.N. Security Council Resolution 660 of 1990, including the clause related to Iraqi withdrawal."

It said: "The willingness on the part of Iraq should be regarded as a guarantee from Iraq (that it would withdraw) and coupled with an immediate and comprehensive cessation of all land, air and sea military operations."

But government officials, although expressing a new tone of hope, said it would be premature to conclude that the war would end soon. They noted that the RCC had coupled the withdrawal offer with numerous other proposals which might be unacceptable to the allies and to Israel. Officials who spoke with reporters gave no indication of the degree to which Iraq would link its withdrawal to the other conditions.

The RCC statement urged a new Arab and world order under which wealthy states would help the development of poor nations. As well as an end to sanctions, it demanded an end to "all the negative measures taken by some of the states against Iraq individually and collectively before Aug. 2nd, which were the real cause, so that matters return to their normal nature, as though all this has not happened and without this bringing Iraq any negative effects for any reason."

Before the invasion, Iraq accused Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of economic sabotage against it by flooding the world market with cheap oil. It said Kuwait was stealing oil from the Rumailah oilfield straddling their border.

The statement called for the Gulf to be a zone free of military bases and any foreign troops. It ended on a defiant note:

Arabs

(Continued from page 1)

Egyptian minister said. "Our preoccupation with the Iraqi aggression will not make us forget our historic obligations to the Palestinian cause."

Egyptian sources said the conference has two working papers on the table, one from the GCC nations and one drafted by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria.

The Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian foreign ministers have met periodically since November to force closer ties. The sources said conferees, meeting in secret, were pondering scenario of how militarily-strong members of the anti-Iraq front like Egypt and Syria can help the wealthy Gulf states in return for their bounty in terms of development funds.

Egypt's 38,500 troops and Syria's 19,000 men in Saudi Arabia may well serve as the nucleus of an Arab force to defend the region along with GCC armies.

Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi said Friday that Baghdad must guarantee Kuwait's freedom after withdrawal and that the U.S.-led military strikes now have no justification, the official Libyan news agency JANA reported.

JANA said Colonel Qadhafi "welcomes the communiqué of the Iraq Revolutionary Command Council."

JANA said that Col. Qadhafi in comments to the agency said that he welcomed "any peaceful initiative and I feel happy that the efforts of Libya for persuading Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait succeeded... but Iraq has a right not to be in a hurry until it gets assured that Kuwait will never be handed to the U.S. or other quarter."

Col. Qadhafi was further quoted as saying: "We should be assured of the independence and freedom of Kuwait. We cannot accept that it gets released from occupation to another occupation."

Council

(Continued from page 1)

"The United States is trying to annihilate Iraq through intensive, comprehensive high-altitude bombing," Abdul Amir Al Anbari said after his speech, which listeners said was laced with references to "hegemonic" activities of the United States and to a "Zionist conspiracy."

Iraq is ready to fight on if the U.S.-led coalition spurs its stated willingness to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait, Iraq's ambassador to France said Friday.

"If the answer to this Iraqi offer is going to be negative, that proves to the world that what is happening (in the war) is not (about) Kuwait, but the destruction of Iraq and the reshaping of the Middle East altogether," Ambassador Abdul Razak Al Hashemi said in a U.S. television interview.

Speaking from Paris by telephone on NBC's Today show, he added: "If the United States and so-called coalition still want to go ahead with this madness, Iraq is ready for it."

Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar urged the United States and its allies to respond with an immediate ceasefire. Simultaneously, Iraq should announce a timetable for withdrawal, he said.

Pakistan welcomed Iraq's offer. Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Mohammad Khan said Iraq's offer was a "good sign" but said Pakistan was waiting for details of the Iraqi statement.

"It is a positive development anyway. We welcome it. If they (Iraqis) are prepared to implement the U.N. resolution, it is definitely a positive development," he said.

Tunisia's ambassador to France said he believed Iraq's offer was serious and Baghdad had accepted the principle of withdrawal.

"I am very happy to hear of this overture. I think this is a serious overture which should be seized and not allowed to go to waste," Ambassador Ibrahim Turki told French Radio. He said the conditions in which Iraq's leadership had expressed its willingness to implement Re-

solution 660, which calls for its withdrawal from Kuwait, should not serve as a pretext to reject the offer.

"These issues must absolutely not be allowed to compromise the basic problem — the principle of retreat — which has been accepted," he said.



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Economy

Bahrain central banker says Gulf too important to abandon

BAHRAIN (R) — Foreign bankers who have turned their backs on the Gulf since the invasion of Kuwait cannot afford to ignore the region, says a Gulf central banker.

"The Gulf region represents a too important banking market to abandon," Bahrain Monetary Agency (BMA) Governor Abdullah Saif told Reuters in a written response to questions.

Bahrain has been badly hit by the economic fallout from the Iraqi invasion and Gulf war. A key regional banking centre, the island state has watched billions of dollars flow out of its offshore banking system to safe havens abroad.

But Saif insists bankers will rediscover Bahrain and that those who have remained loyal will be remembered.

"It is reasonable to assume that those banks which had remained committed to the Gulf region at these difficult times would have naturally earned the goodwill of clients and would be more than compensated after the war in terms of more business directed to them," Saif said.

He stressed that as a matter of policy the BMA would treat all banks equally within its selective licensing policy.

Gulf bankers have complained of a lack of support from international banks since the Aug. 2 invasion.

Interbank lending all but dried up, causing liquidity problems for many Gulf-based banks and finance houses, with foreign banks unwilling to expose themselves to Gulf risks.

"They didn't bother to really assess the risk," said one foreign banker. "They didn't look at the map, just thought Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE — all in the Gulf, same risk."

Bankers in the Gulf say Japanese banks in particular cut off the lifeline of interbank credit and sharply cut back their own Gulf operations — withdrawing key expatriate staff shortly after Iraqi tanks rolled into Kuwait.

Saif said he expects banks to return.

The job of recycling the vast petro-dollars fed into the region from oil exports must go on. Bahrain would remain pivotal in that role, providing tax incentives, good communications and a good lifestyle, he said.

"We are confident that once the hostility in the Gulf is over, banking services will remain its national hub of banking..." Saif said.

The Gulf war has cost Bahrain's banking system dearly. Total assets of Bahrain offshore banking units (OBUs) fell to \$57.7 billion in November from \$61.6 billion on Aug. 2 and \$71.2 billion in July and a peak of \$73 billion in March 1990.

Saif said he believed the BMA and other central banks had successfully shored up the regional banking system against the liquidity squeeze brought by the Gulf crisis.

Without giving details or saying whether they had been successful, Saif said the BMA and other central banks in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had put pressure on international banks to restore lines of credit to local finance houses.

Since the Gulf crisis and the outbreak of war the BMA had pledged to support commercial bank liquidity by repurchase agreement (REPO) financing, suspending treasury bill issues, and encouraging banks to roll over deposits and liquidate some assets.

The Bahrain Monetary Agency also imported \$70 million in cash to sell to banks and money changers to deal with the heavy demand for hard cash, Saif said.

"It is of paramount importance and reassuring for both the banks and the banking public to know that banking authorities stand ready to back and support efforts to weather the crisis," Saif said. "Hopefully the BMA has already demonstrated by the measures it has taken that it is able to live up to that role."

Saif said only three small OBUs had left Bahrain since the Gulf crisis. Two new institutions had been licensed leaving a total of 54 OBUs against 55 on Aug. 2.

Major OBUs including some Gulf-owned banks reinforced their liquidity by selling assets, rolling over deposits, and asking shareholders and owners for support, Saif said.

Bahrain had been battered by the Gulf crisis just as it was recovering from a Gulf recession caused by the low oil prices of the early to mid-1980s, but Saif said it would recover.

"The invasion of Kuwait and ... outbreak of the Gulf war has ... disrupted and dampened that progress. But ... the adverse effects of the crisis were substantially offset by the commitment of banks to the region and their confidence in its prospects and potentials," Saif said.

EC proposes pan-European 'energy charter'

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — The EC Commission has proposed a "European energy charter" to bring the financial, technological and energy resources of east and west Europe into a single European market.

The idea comes from Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers. Although still vague, it seeks to boost cooperation in energy among countries between the Atlantic and the Urals — an ideal

of the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

EC Energy Commissioner Antonio Cardoso e Cunha told reporters the charter would bring together energy resources, technology and consumers from across the continent.

He said it would set common rules on free trade, investment, access to and exploitation of resources, technical and safety stan-

dards, and research and development.

Increasing energy trade with the Soviet Union, the world's largest oil producer, would lessen western Europe's dependence on oil from the Middle East and other unstable sources.

The Soviet Union is interested in an energy charter, said Cardoso e Cunha who has visited Moscow to gauge Soviet reaction to the plan.

He said this was still the case even despite the EC's suspension of a \$1 billion food aid programme because of the crackdown on the Baltic republics.

Nonetheless, Cardoso e Cunha said "a cooperation scheme of this size is dependent on political realities."

He said the charter would be "subject to political conditionality" as are other trade and cooperation programmes.

Palestinians live in worst poverty

War squeezes Israeli citrus industry

TEL AVIV (R) — Citrus fruit, Israel's biggest cash crop, is being squeezed by the Gulf war.

Farmers have stayed home to dodge Iraqi missiles and Palestinian fruit pickers are kept from work by army curfews.

With oranges rotting on trees, industry officials say about a fifth of the year's fruit has already been lost and predict exports may be down by about a third this year.

Citrus accounts for about half of the \$500 million in produce that Israel exports a year, most of it to Europe.

"It wasn't a good year to begin with. There wasn't much rain so the harvest was later than usual and when the fruit was finally ripe, the war came," said Avi Margolit, head of Tnuva Export, which exports almost half the country's citrus.

The citrus industry is already hurting because of ever scarcer water for irrigation and a rise in farmers turning to more lucrative products.

Iraqi Scud missile attacks in January brought the harvest to a complete halt for more than a week as the army ordered Israelis to stay indoors and imposed a curfew on the 1.75 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israelis now venture out during the day but only 6,000 Palestinians of the more than 100,000 who usually work in Israel have been allowed back to work.

Israel, worried Palestinians may show their support for Iraq with guerrilla attacks on Jews, has kept most of them confined to the occupied territories.

"Harvesting was down to zero at the start of the war. Now production is about 60 per cent," Margolit said.

Palestinians make up the brunt

of the 6,000-strong labour force needed to harvest the citrus crop and they are being replaced largely by inexperienced young Israelis.

"These guys fill about half as many boxes per head as the usual workers," said Avraham Ben-David, nodding towards five Israelis replacing the 30 Palestinians who normally pick oranges in the orchards he manages.

"I think the harvest here will be about half the usual," said Ben-David, who oversees some 2,400 trees in Hod Hasharon, east of Tel Aviv.

"The only reason it's even that much is because we got 15 per cent of it in before the war began and I'll only reach 50 per cent if they let more Palestinians come back to work before the harvest ends in March," he added.

The Israelis say the pay is so low they consider themselves volunteers. Fruit pickers in Israel earn about 25 shekels (\$12.50) for each half-tonne box they fill.

"I volunteered because it hurts to think of all this fruit just rotting," said Rachel Diamant, a newspaper editor temporarily laid off due to the war.

"The pay is ridiculous — I fill about a box a day — and it's made me realise how much the Palestinians get screwed (exploited)," she said.

Palestinians living under army curfew for almost a month are suffering the severest economic and social pressures of Israel's 23-year occupation.

"The people are now living in the worst poverty," an official aiding Palestinians said at Kalandia refugee camp just south of occupied Jerusalem. "They are in a big jail."

Kalandia, like most of the occupied West Bank, has been

under curfew since the Gulf war started on Jan. 17. Other than a respite of two or three hours once a week to buy food, residents have been confined to their homes.

Conditions are tougher in the teeming Gaza Strip, where curfews were imposed even before the war to stifle unrest over the assassination in Tunis of Abu Iyad, the second-in-command of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The war curfews were imposed initially to preempt any actions in support of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. But human rights groups are now questioning their continued enforcement.

"The curfew can't go on forever just because there is support among Palestinians for Saddam Hussein," said Daphna Golas of b'Tselem, which monitors human rights abuses.

Golan joined other Israeli human rights groups at a Jerusalem news conference Wednesday to present a report on the effects of the curfews and warn that living conditions were becoming steadily worse.

The curfew has halted work and therefore income and pushed the 1.75 million residents toward poverty. The human rights report estimated losses to Feb. 10 at \$131 million.

A slight easing of curfews this month allowed some people to work in the territories but most areas remain under curfew and travel is banned. More vital are restrictions on work in Israel, which some Israelis would like made permanent.

"Lifting the curfew itself will certainly not relieve the economic pressure," David Kretzmer, a professor of law at Hebrew University, told the news conference.

More than 100,000 Palestinians worked in Israel before the Gulf war, a third of all jobs held by residents of Gaza and the West Bank.

A total ban on Arab entry into Israel was eased this week, but only to admit a few thousand each day. They are escorted to citrus and construction industries that depend on their labour.

"The state of war does not lessen the duty of the state to respect human rights," said the human rights report.

"Any step such as curfew or closure which inflicts heavy damages on civilians, steadily worsening with each passing day, must not be continued indefinitely," it said.

Despite the unprecedented length of the curfews, the report said 1,291 of 3,647 people arrested were accused of crimes other than breaking the curfew. It said they included prominent Palestinians disliked for their political views.

Illustrating the curfew's effect on health, the report said Mokassed Hospital, the best-known facility for Palestinians, had registered only 150 births in the past month instead of a normal total of 500.

Schools, which only reopened on Jan. 13 after being ordered by Israeli authorities to take a two-week break, have been closed throughout the Gulf war.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, established after the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 to care for Palestinian refugees, distributes food to registered refugees.

It now wants to start giving food to the entire population of the occupied territories from Feb. 15 because of the growing poverty but needs Israeli approval.

Japanese banks revive global financial activity

BASLE, Switzerland (R) — International banking activity rose sharply in the third quarter of 1990 despite the Gulf crisis and economic slowdown in several major industrial nations, the West's leading central bank agency said Thursday.

"A revival of Japanese banks' interbank activity... was the principal factor behind this sharp turn-around," the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) said in its latest quarterly review.

The Basle-based institution said net international lending jumped to \$145 billion from \$60 billion in the second quarter last year.

The BIS, which acts as a central bank for Western central banks, based its study on data reported by banks in the Group of 10 industrialised countries and other important European and offshore centres.

About \$15 billion of the growth in third-quarter lending was due

to German monetary and economic union in early July, since figures to the end of September included eastern German banks as reporting institutions for the first time.

But the main factor behind the lending increase was a recovery in the international activity of Japanese banks, which had virtually ground to a halt in the first half of 1990 when the yen was weak and Japanese share prices fell, the BIS said.

The room for expansion created by the first-half lull combined with the yen's subsequent recovery to give Japanese banks "sufficient scope to increase their international activities during the third quarter," it added.

Japanese entities were also said to be a major factor behind a jump to \$63.2 billion in the number of new international bond issues announced in the third quarter, from \$55.5 billion in the previous quarter.

The BIS said the reopening of the market for equity-related issues for Japanese borrowers released pent-up borrowing demand.

In addition, the negative impact on Japanese bank capital from a continued fall in share prices persuaded authorities to "allow banks to raise subordinated debt capital in the international markets."

The BIS said banking activity with Iraq and Kuwait was seriously disrupted after the Iraqi invasion of its smaller neighbour in August and the subsequent international agreement to freeze business with both countries. But the impact on banks' outstanding positions regarding Iraq and Kuwait was marginal.

The BIS reported a shift in bank and non-bank deposits from the Middle Eastern members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to Britain, Switzerland and the United States. But it gave no figures.

Turkey to extract natural gas in Syria

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey will extract natural gas in Syria close to the Turkish border, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency has said.

Okay Vural, general manager of Turkey's state pipeline agency Botas, was quoted as saying one million cubic metres would be delivered daily to Turkey from the reserves near the Turkish border with a capacity of about cubic metres.

Fatih Ocal, an official from Botas, said that the reserves were situated about 250 kilometres away from the border and the two countries would participate equally in the laying of pipes across the border.

Anatolian said the state-run Turkish Petroleum Company (TPAO) would prepare a feasibility study on extracting gas from the Syrian field, which it did not name.

Soviet president hints at slow transition to market economy

MOSCOW (Agencies) — President Mikhail Gorbachev said on Wednesday that switching to a market economy would not bring the Soviet Union instant prosperity, hinting that he favoured a slow transition.

"The person who thinks that the market is a panacea for all ills and will immediately lead us to the kingdom of prosperity is mistaken," Gorbachev told a conference of state prosecutors.

Consequently, there will be a transitional period, but not a very short one," he said.

Gorbachev's remarks followed indication by Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov that the Soviet leadership increasingly favoured a cautious reform plan.

"It is at symposiums that it is

easy to debate 'shock therapy,' but in fact one would be very irresponsible to prescribe such recipes for our society," Pavlov told the trade union daily Trud in an interview.

Gorbachev originally backed a 500-day plan for a rapid switch from a centralised economy to a market system. But later he withdrew his support for the scheme, which has been shelved.

Communist hardliners, worried about a return to capitalism, say a rapid transition to a free market system would lead to mass unemployment and social upheaval. Gorbachev echoed these fears in his speech Wednesday.

"The market by itself and the mixed economy will not guaran-

tee well-being... the market economy bears fruit where it is combined with mastery of new technologies and the implementation of a structured policy," the Soviet leader said.

"It is not possible to cross in a leap to the market (economy). That would be a risky venture," he added.

The government newspaper Izvestia has said that prices of most food and consumer goods would double or triple as the government eliminates state subsidies to producers, but wages also would rise.

Along with wages, pensions, children's welfare payments and other incomes would also be increased to compensate for the entire increase in food prices and

about half of the other price hikes, the newspaper reported Wednesday.

The newspaper did not indicate when the price hikes might be introduced, but noted that the plan must also be approved by the national legislature which is to meet next week. Another federal official said earlier the proposals required the approval of the federation council which is headed by President Gorbachev and includes the leaders of the 15 Soviet republics.

Vladimir Shcherbakov, head of the Soviet state committee on labour and social issues, told Soviet television that consumers would also be fully compensated for the higher costs of children's goods, clothes and footwear.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES			
Thursday, February 14, 1991 Central Bank official rates			
U.S. dollar	Buy	132.9	133.7
French franc	100	518.1	514.2
Japanese yen	100	402.3	404.7
Dutch guilder	100	121.2	121.9
Swedish crown	100	140.3	140.7
Deutsche mark	100	221.4	222.7
Swiss franc	100	221.4	222.7

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES			
LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.			
One Sterling	1.9800/10	U.S. dollar	1.1522/32
One U.S. dollar	1.4673/80	Canadian dollar	1.6330/40
	1.2576/83	Deutsche marks	30.20/23
	4.9960/10	Dutch guilders	1103/1104
	129.70/80	Swiss francs	129.70/80
	5.4990/40	Belgian francs	5.4990/40
	5.7400/50	French francs	5.7400/50
	5.6440/50	Italian lire	5.6440/50
One ounce of gold	365.10/365.60	Japanese yen	365.10/365.60
		Swedish crowns	
		Norwegian crowns	
		Danish crowns	
		U.S. dollars	

WORLD STOCK MARKET	
SYDNEY — A barrage of buy orders in the last 30 minutes of trading pushed the market into positive territory. The All Ordinaries index closed 3.8 points stronger at 1,376.60.	
TOKYO — Stocks closed slightly easier but well off afternoon lows, as the market followed Wall Street down to end its eight-day rally with some profit-taking. Underlying bullishness limited the decline, brokers said. The Nikkei index slipped 12.63 points to 25,343.74.	
SINGAPORE — The exchange was closed for the Chinese new year. In a half-day session Thursday, the Straits Times index advanced 15.45 points to 1,338.70.	
BOMBAY — Prices rose for the second day on buying by state-owned investment houses. Brokers said the market undercurrent was suspect. The BSE index rose 15.37 points to 1,039.60. The National Index gained 4.52 to 526.75.	
FRANKFURT — Shares rose sharply on news Iraq was ready to withdraw from Kuwait but retreated a bit when its conditions for such a move became clear. The DAX index ended 44.67 higher at 1,531.19 after hitting an intra-day high of 1,540.68.	
ZURICH — Shares closed up but below the day's high after fluctuating wildly following the Iraqi report. The all-share SPI index rose 12 to 996.5.	
PARIS — Shares ended at their highest for more than two months but below their peak in hectic afternoon trading following the reports from Baghdad. The CAC-40 index ended up 17.71 at 1,670.39.	
LONDON — Shares ended below 2,300. They drifted downwards in muddled afternoon trading as early hopes that Iraq would be ready to quit Kuwait receded. The FTSE index ended up 2.5 at 2,296.9.	
NEW YORK — Blue chips were steady at moderately higher levels at midday. The Dow was up 16 at 2,893.	

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TOTAL RECALL

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Cinema **NIJOUN** Tel: 675571

ROBOCOB

Show: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

Cinema **PHILADELPHIA** Tel: 634144

LAMBADA

Performances: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30

Cinema **PLAZA** Tel: 699238

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U.S. terms Soviet plot charges 'ridiculous'; weighs aid to Baltics

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department has dismissed as "ridiculous" a Soviet charge that Western and Soviet banks had engaged in conspiracy to destroy the country's financial system.

"The story is a transparent effort by Soviet authorities to blame foreigners for economic and financial difficulties that result primarily from the Soviet Union's own domestic policies," spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said.

The allegation was made Tuesday by Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, who said the conspirators, whom he did not identify, had been plotting to overthrow President Mikhail Gorbachev.

He said the plotters had planned to flood the Soviet economy with billions of rubles but that the scheme was thwarted by recent monetary measures.

Tutwiler said the allegations can only further damage prospects for attracting foreign investment into the Soviet Union.

"The charge is ridiculous," she said. "It's counterproductive to stir up fears of foreigners and

foreign banks. Such statements contradict other Soviet efforts to attract foreign investment and expertise."

She said that during Pavlov's tenure as finance minister, the government printed tens of billions of rubles — "a policy that is at the root of the USSR's current monetary difficulties."

The Bush administration is considering economic and diplomatic steps to expand U.S. support for the rebellious Baltic republics in their drive for independence from the Soviet Union.

The measures under consideration include the opening of information offices in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and providing technical assistance for their economies, U.S. officials said Wednesday.

A senior American diplomat, Richard Miles, has made two visits to the capitals of the three republics and will hold more frequent discussions with independence leaders, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

President George Bush announced last week the United States would provide medical aid

to the Baltics. The hospital ship Hope, under contract to the Agency for International Development, set sail Tuesday night with supplies.

The medical help may only be the first step in a vastly expanded programme. New initiatives are being prepared within the State Department for the consideration of administration decision-makers.

"It is not a new policy. We are trying to demonstrate our political support," an official who spoke on condition of anonymity said. "So far what we may do is at the talking stage."

The United States has never recognised the incorporation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into the Soviet Union in World War II. But successive administrations kept silent until the independence movement gathered force amid the more liberal atmosphere permitted by President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.

Until recently, Secretary of State James A. Baker III and other senior officials spoke only of U.S. support for "self-determination." They wanted to

be careful not to antagonise Moscow, with which the United States had built up good relations.

But as the relations skidded, partly because of the tough measures taken by Gorbachev against the secessionists, Baker and others have endorsed independence directly.

"We've made it very clear that we want to see the aspirations of the Baltic people for independence fulfilled," he said in a televised interview Sunday.

Baker's specific reference to independence was intentional and designed to signal Moscow the Bush administration was exploring ways to increase its support for the breakthrough movement, the officials said.

Ironically, the fact that the United States does not recognise the incorporation of the Baltics complicates what can be done to help.

For instance, the officials said, to open U.S. information offices in Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, the three Baltic capitals, the United States may have to deal with the Soviet Union to have the offices accredited.

Vienna troop talks stalled

VIENNA (R) — Negotiators from East and West are stalling talks on an agreement cutting troop levels in Europe after Western accusations that Moscow is circumventing a treaty slashing conventional weapons, diplomats said Friday.

The U.S. State Department said Thursday that Western delegates to the 22-nation Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) talks had decided to do no substantive business for the time being, and the diplomats said most Eastern delegates shared this view.

A Western delegate said: "There was general agreement that there was not much point negotiating on new obligations while existing ones were not being met."

A senior Warsaw Pact diplomat said: "The talks have not been broken off, but we decided there was no point at present in pursuing follow-up talks if there is nothing to follow up."

The CFE negotiators are working on a pact cutting troop levels, to follow a treaty signed last November which set ceilings on the amount of tanks, guns and planes that could be held.

But Western delegates have accused Moscow of trying to get around the CFE treaty by reclassifying army units as navy, which are not covered by the agreement, or pulling equipment east of the Urals, outside the treaty zone.

Delegates said the Soviet Union came under attacks from virtually all sides at the first plenary session of the new treaty talks in Vienna Thursday.

There was some pretty frank speaking, one delegate said.

Asked if all delegations apart from Moscow were of the same view, he replied: "More or less."

Chief Soviet delegate Oleg Grinevsky was reported to have told delegates at the session that some problems over interpretation had arisen since the CFE treaty signing but that these should be discussed in the joint consultation group set up to monitor the agreement's implementation.

Grinevsky said the problems with the treaty should not influence work on the troop reduction talks, delegates said.

The delegates agreed to hold another plenary on Feb. 21, but it was unclear whether these would be any further such sessions for the time being, a Western delegate said. During the first CFE treaty negotiations there were plenaries every week.

Cambodian government ready for peace talks

BANGKOK (AP) — Khmer Rouge guerrillas are launching a strong offensive against Cambodia's second-largest city, but the government is ready to resume peace talks at any time, Phnom Penh's foreign minister said Friday.

Asked about the Khmer Rouge shelling of Battambang, a provincial capital in the west, Cambodia's Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong said, "the other side is launching a very strong offensive. It shows which side wants peace and which side wants to settle the conflict by military means."

He said the government still controls the town.

Hor Nam Hong spoke with a reporter just before starting talks with Thai Premier Chatichai Choonhavan.

It was the last of Chatichai's talks this week with the Cambodian government and the three rebel groups seeking its overthrow, of which the Communist Khmer Rouge is the strongest.

He was trying to encourage flexibility over a U.N. peace plan and to get the Cambodians to iron out differences in talks for which Indonesia has offered to play most. The guerrillas have agreed to attend the talks in Indonesia.

Hor Nam Hong said Phnom Penh was ready for a meeting "anywhere, at any time" of the Supreme National Council. The council, comprising guerrilla and government representatives, is supposed to negotiate a settlement and later guide U.N. involvement in a transitional period before elections.

However, recent statement indicated Phnom Penh was not yielding to guerrilla demands that the government and army be dismantled before the proposed elections.

Cheam Sim, the no. 2 man of Cambodia's Communist-style party, said Wednesday the government would continue efforts at a negotiated settlement, but on the basis of "the status quo both political and military."

He spoke at the close of a two-day meeting in which national recruitment councils were urged to step up the military draft, the state radio reported Wednesday.

The law, promulgated in July 1989, says all male citizens from 17 to 30 years of age must enlist "regardless of their religious belief, nationality and social status."

Many Cambodians fleeing the expanded draft in recent months have arrived in guerrilla-controlled refugee camps in Thailand, aid officials said.

The government of Premier Hun Sen, which Vietnam installed after invading in late 1978 and ousting the brutal Khmer Rouge government, is battling the guerrilla forces of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia's former ruler Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, a non-Communist group.

The Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot ruled Cambodia in 1975-78. During that time, hundreds of thousands of its 8 million people died from Khmer Rouge executions, famine and civil unrest. The Communist-style Hun Sen government is largely led by Khmer Rouge defectors.

Phnom Penh has accepted most of the basic points of the U.N. plan, but wants further discussions on its proposals for extensive U.N. involvement in the country's administration and military affairs before elections are held. The guerrillas fully accept the plan.

Japan also is continuing mediation efforts. Yukio Imagawa, a minister at the Japanese embassy in Bangkok who played a key role in Cambodian peace talks in Tokyo in June, arrived in Phnom Penh Wednesday for talks there, said a report by SPK, the Cambodian government's official news agency.

Another Japanese embassy official is to hold talks later this month with Chinese leaders, the main backers of the guerrillas.

As peace efforts continue, fighting intensified in northwestern areas of Cambodia bordering Thailand and in the central province of Kompong Thom.

The government news agency Thursday said troops have launched "scores of counterattacks" against the guerrillas in those areas starting the last week of January. Four arms and materials depots in Kompong Thom have been seized, it said.

In Kompong Thom, about 6,000 government troops armed with tanks and heavy artillery are attacking along National Highway 6 from four directions, said a statement Thursday by Sihanouk's group.

In northwestern Siem Reap province, government forces were trying in vain to recapture the districts of Varin and Sre Noy, the statement said.

The guerrillas denied government reports of heavy rebel casualties.

Kompong Thom's capital is 128 kilometres north of Phnom Penh. An official of Sihanouk's group said the Khmer Rouge has been trying to deflect the attacks in Kompong Thom by shelling Battambang, about 280 kilometres northwest of Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge Radio said Wednesday its forces had been shelling Battambang for the past three days, and set the town ablaze. A broadcast Thursday claimed enemy troops who tried to rescue comrades in the town were killed by guerrilla artillery fire.

Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia to strengthen ties

BUDAPEST, Hungary (Agencies) — The leaders of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia gathered Friday to sign agreements strengthening their ties within an economic and politically transformed Europe.

The summit was to approve documents formalising countries in trade, a sector that for decades was controlled by membership in the Soviet-dominated Comecon trade bloc.

It also was likely to touch on regional security — an issue that in the past was exclusively the concern of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact military alliance — and an unexpected influx of Soviet refugees.

Two documents dealing with cooperation among the three former Communist countries and broader political issues were to be signed.

The meeting brought together Hungarian Prime Minister Jozsef Antall and President Arpad Goncz, Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel and Prime Minister Marian Calfa, and Polish President Lech Walesa and his prime minister, Krzysztof Bielecki.

Antall, in an interview published Friday by the Magyar Hirlap newspaper, said the meeting served to hasten European unity.

"The ... summit can help coordinate our political and economic policies so that all three can integrate into European organisation more smoothly," Antall said.

The Czechoslovak and Polish delegations arrived at 9 a.m. (0800 GMT) at the Hungarian parliament building. The sprawling neo-Gothic structure was festooned with Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovak flags.

In the afternoon, discussions were to move 10 kilometres north to the ancient castle in Visegrad, the site of a meeting of Hungarian, Czech and Polish kings 656 years ago.

The monarchs at that meeting agreed on trade and security measures meant to give them a greater role in European affairs.

With the democratisation of East Europe, Comecon and the Warsaw Pact are trying to shed their past emphasis on Communist-dictated unity.

Foreign and defence ministers of the six-nation Warsaw Pact, scheduled to meet Feb. 25 in Budapest, plan to set an April 1 deadline for scrapping the pact's military activities.

Prime ministers of the nine Comecon countries, including Cuba, Mongolia and Vietnam, meet Feb. 27-28 in Budapest to try to transform the organisation into a loose consultative body.

Despite such attempts, there is widespread doubt the organisations will play any major roles in the future, given the interest of Moscow's former European allies in joining the common market and improving ties with NATO.

Havel Monday suggested his country form closer ties with NATO. Antall was the first leader of a Warsaw Pact country to visit NATO headquarters in Brussels in July.

A Hungarian government source said the leaders had been prepared to speak out forcibly on the need to demilitarise the Warsaw Pact, but a Soviet decision to have the pact scrap its military role had made that unnecessary.

Ershad trial starts today

DHAKA (AP) — Ousted President Hussain Muhammad Ershad will stand trial this week on charges of illegally possessing arms, the Dhaka High Court ruled Thursday.

The two-judge bench ordered the trial to start on Saturday as originally scheduled, reversing an earlier decision to stay the trial until next month, United News of Bangladesh reported.

The start of the trial had been postponed Monday after Ershad's lawyers argued that the government was violating the community. But Attorney General Aminul Haq said Thursday the immunity did not extend to the illegal possession of arms, clearing the way for the trial, United News said.

The date of the trial is important because if a fast verdict of guilty is returned, Ershad will be disqualified from contesting the Feb. 27 general elections.

Under Bangladesh law, people awaiting trial are eligible to run for office, but convicts are barred.

Ershad, a former army general, resigned on Dec. 6 after weeks of street protests against his rule. He was placed under house arrest six days later.

Authorities said they seized eight unlicensed revolvers and ammunition during a raid on his home.

Since then, Ershad has been charged with illegal possession of arms, embezzlement, misuse of power and receiving kickbacks from British Aerospace in the purchase of three turboprop jets. No date has been set for trials on any of the other three charges.

Ershad took power in a bloodless coup in 1982. He resigned from the army in 1986 and won presidential elections, which opposition parties claimed were rigged.

Communists still dominate Soviet military

MOSCOW (AP) — Eleven months after the Communist Party lost its guaranteed monopoly on power, it remains the only political party active in the military, a general said Wednesday.

"For the time being, we have to multiparty system," Gen. Alexander Ovchinnikov, first deputy political officer for the army and navy, told reporters.

While the Communists maintain 37,000 party organisations inside the military, other political parties have none, he said.

Maj.-Gen. Boris Goloskov of the Soviet Border Patrol said he knew of only one case of a soldier announced that he had joined the reformist Democratic Party and offered political newspaper for sale in his unit.

All Soviet generals still belong to the Communist Party as do the vast majority of other officers, Ovchinnikov said.

Authority over military promotions was officially transferred from the Communist Party Central Committee to the Defence Ministry last spring. But recommendations for promotions are still decided by boards of officers, almost all them Communist Party members.

While the national Communist Party is losing millions of members, Ovchinnikov said the military's party rolls have climbed slightly. He said about 40,000 soldiers have joined the party while about 35,000 have quit. There are about 1 million party members among the more than 4 million Soviet members of the military.

The Soviet military also has tens of thousands of political officers who were assigned full-time to enforce Communist policy. Now, these officers have been told to promote the policies of the Soviet government. But since the government is still controlled by communists, there has been limited practical change.

Asked if the army's top Communist Party Council agrees with right-wing calls for imposition of presidential rule or martial law in areas of political or ethnic tensions, Ovchinnikov said the council is not authorised to debate government policy.

42 crushed to death outside Mexican church

CHALMA, Mexico (R) — Forty-two Mexican peasants, mostly women and children, were crushed to death on Ash Wednesday as thousands of Christian pilgrims fought their way into a church, a popular shrine in central Mexico.

Red Cross officials said that 25 people also were injured in the crush at the church, a shrine drawing pilgrims from across Mexico to ask for miracles, cures for illness or give thanks for favours rendered.

"It was a human avalanche," Dr. Rodolfo Bribiesca, head of the Emergency Health Department of the State of Mexico told Reuters of the incident in Chalma, a farm town about 50 kilometres southwest of the capital.

Spokesmen for Mexico's Roman Catholic Church described Wednesday's disaster as the worst associated with a religious ceremony in modern Mexican history.

Red Cross officials said 42 people died in the disaster.

Dozens of bodies lay under blankets in a makeshift morgue in the town centre. The face of one

girl of about seven years of age had been rubbed raw in the crush.

Pilgrims flock to Chalma for Ash Wednesday, which marks the start of lent, a 40-day Christian period of penance that ends on the day before Easter.

Thousands of people were streaming Wednesday morning down Chalma's main streets, lined with stalls selling flowers, crosses, candles and other religious items, when a crush developed at an archway in front of the church.

"We couldn't pass. They were pushing from behind and shouting at us to go back from the front," a weeping peasant called Ricardo said.

"My wife grabbed my hand, then she was pulled from me. The next time I saw her was here," he told Reuters outside the morgue.

Ricardo was waiting for a coffin to take the body of his wife Mercedes home to Puebla, a neighbouring state, from where they had travelled in the back of a truck.

New government bans 91 more from leaving Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — The week-old government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide Thursday barred 91 high-level civil servants from leaving Haiti, a news report said.

The order, reported by independent Radio Haiti Inter, extends a ban issued last week. It raises to 253 the number of prominent Haitians, including former provisional President Ertha Pascal-Trouillot, prohibited from travelling abroad.

The travel ban was issued by government prosecutor Bayard Vincent at the request of a judicial commission investigating corruption and repression perpetrated by the 29-year Duvalier dictatorship and successor regimes.

The radio reported that all those named Thursday served under Mrs. Pascal-Trouillot's 11-month interim civilian government, which preceded the Aristide administration.

Among them were Port-Au-Prince Irene Ridoré and Robert Sabat, president of the Electoral Council. The independent nine-member council organised

the Dec. 16 general elections in which Aristide was chosen president by a two-thirds vote margin. About 1,000 international observers monitored the balloting and declared it the first truly democratic election in Haiti's 187-year history.

Aristide, who was inaugurated on Feb. 7, pledged during his campaign to end decades of corrupt and repressive government.

The investigation is based on a constitutional requirement that all civil servants handing government funds give a public accounting at the end of their term, according to political sources. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

Aristide has been criticised for imposing travel restrictions without presenting specific evidence of wrongdoing, lumping known and suspected criminal with government officials who have clean records.

The initial ban encompassed virtually every top official of the Pascal-Trouillot administration. They were barred from leaving the country pending judicial and legislative hearings.

Actor recovering from helicopter crash

SANTA PAULA, California (AP) — Actor Kirk Douglas nursed cuts and bruises but cartoon voice artist Noel Blanc was in critical condition as investigators tried to unravel how their helicopter crashed with an airplane.

The single-engine Aerobatic plane after the collision Wednesday. A veteran airline captain in the stunt plane was killed along with a student.

Blanc, 52, was in critical but stable condition at Santa Paula Memorial hospital, nursing supervisor Cecilia Moore said. Blanc suffered a fractured leg, broken ribs, a bruised kidney and a ruptured lung. He was using a breathing machine.

Douglas, 74, was listed in fair condition at Cedars-Sinai Medical

Centre in Los Angeles. Spokesman Ron Wise said the actor, who wears a heart pacemaker, suffered a scalp cut, scrapes and bruises.

"Neither of them have much recollection of what happened after the liftoff," said Eric Douglas, a son of the actor.

Beverly Hills police officer Michael Carra, who was in the helicopter with Douglas and Blanc, was treated for bruises Wednesday night and released.

The helicopter and plane collided about 40 feet (some 12 metres) above ground shortly after both aircraft took off.

Blanc was piloting the helicopter, the younger Douglas said Thursday in Los Angeles. Previously, he had said Carra was the helicopter pilot.

Douglas expects to be released during the weekend, his son said.

Also Thursday, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators had an identical airplane re-enact the plane's takeoff at Santa Paula Airport. The pilot, Bret Ebaugh, reported there was no forward visibility from the cockpit of the high-speed aircraft during takeoff.

"Once you apply the power and you're lined up with the runway, you're blind," said Ebaugh, a pilot who works for CP Aviation at the small airport. NTSB investigator Thomas Wilcox said witnesses report both aircraft took off at the same time. Then the Bell 206 long-range helicopter, which had been flying parallel to the Pitts special stunt plane, flew across the runway.

Global warming conference makes little progress

CHANTILLY, Virginia (AP) — Delegates from about 100 nations concluded a 10-day conference on global warming with little agreement on anything except to pursue the problem further later this year.

Environmentalists expressed disappointment over the pace of the United Nations proceedings, the first negotiating steps toward approving a treaty to limit emissions of the so-called "greenhouse" gases.

Many European countries would like a treaty with a timetable for cutting carbon dioxide emissions, the major contributor to global warming. Some nations already have committed to stabilising or reducing carbon dioxide by the year 2000.

Carbon dioxide is an inevitable product of the burning of fossil fuels.

Other nations, including the United States, have been reluctant

to commit themselves to specific emission reductions, fearful that a dramatic shift away from fossil fuels might threaten economic growth.

These philosophical differences moved to the foreground almost immediately in the opening session of talks more than a week ago and served as a backdrop during the daily discussions that concluded late Thursday at a plush conference resort in the Virginia countryside.

The delegates agreed to establish two working groups that will begin to consider a general draft of a treaty at a second round of talks later this year. It remained unclear when and where the next negotiations would be held.

Late Thursday, it was decided that a working group would be established to consider both the need to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and financial and technical assistance to developing

countries to deal with global warming.

Much discussion during the conference revolved around the scope of future negotiations.

For example, the United States had insisted that the working group discuss not only carbon dioxide emissions, but other greenhouse gases as well. Some European delegations had insisted that emphasis be placed on carbon dioxide since the principal other man-made greenhouse gases, the chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs, already are being reduced under an existing treaty.

Several delegations from developing nations insisted that the subject of financial and technological assistance be given priority treatment by the working groups. At the same time the United States sought to make certain the organising language did not commit anyone to specific levels of financial assistance.

"I've seen glaciers move faster than this," said Arlen Meyer, one of the environmentalists observing the proceedings.

"They've spent 10 days yammering about the shape of the table. They're not even seriously negotiating. There's nothing substantive being discussed," complained Daniel Becker of the Sierra Club. "It's devastatingly disappointing."

Some members of both European and U.S. delegations also said they were disappointed with the lack of progress made during the 10 days of discussions, although none of these officials would speak for attribution.

While scientists agree the release of carbon dioxide and other gases is causing a warming of the Earth as the gases trap the sun's heat, there is disagreement over how much of an impact such warming might have.

COLUMN

Dance With Wolves gets 12 Oscar nominations

LOS ANGELES (R) — Kevin Costner, a Hollywood maverick who went out and made a three-hour Western epic after all the major studio turned him away, saw "Dances With Wolves" top the Oscar nominations with 12. Costner, a respected actor, made the film mostly with own money after two years of peddling his story of a cavalry officer who leaves the army to live with Sioux Indians in the American plains. Costner took his revenge with nominations for best actor and best director, while his film is nominated for best picture and two co-stars are nominated for best supporting actor and best supporting actress. The Godfather, Part III, whose predecessors were big Oscar winners, was second in the nominations announced by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences with seven, including best picture and best director for Francis Ford Coppola. Dick Tracy, a summer box office disappointment despite a star-studded cast led by Warren Beatty, also won seven nominations, mostly in technical categories. However Al Pacino, overlooked for his starring role in Godfather, was nominated for best supporting actor in Tracy. Other nominees in the best picture category were Goodfellas, about mafia life, Ghost, a love story and commercial success that was a surprise nominee, and Awakenings, about patients in a New York City hospital which also earned a best actor nomination for Robert DeNiro.

Japanese women's tabloid shuts down

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's first newspaper designed for women stopped publication because of financial problems, company officials said. Kyo Moriyama, a spokesman for publisher Ranka Sha Co., said the newspaper Lady Kong did not get enough financial support in part because of the Gulf war. When Lady Kong, which described itself in English as a "newsy tabloid for Tokyoites," hit the newsstands late November, it was full of fluff despite earlier expectations of more feminism. Sales in the first month were only 40 per cent of its daily press run of 350,000. Moriyama said sales had improved to about 60 per cent of press run as the paper published more news of the Gulf war. "We realised women wanted more news than we had thought. So we increased the number of news stories," he said. The tabloid also tried to attract female readers by using stain-free ink that would not dirty women's hands and clothing. The newspaper was owned by a joint venture between the Japanese publisher and a British brokerage. Investors included Oriental Co., the nation's leading financial company.

French soup kitchen serve caviar

PARIS (R) — Nuns running soup kitchens in the French port of Marseille were doling out Russian caviar this week after police impounded 15 kilograms of the delicacy from Soviet sailors. The Paris daily Le Parisien said the sailors were caught selling their contraband at knock-down prices from makeshift stalls near the old port. It quoted the little sisters of the poor as saying they would have preferred a donation of chicken.

Robbers steal \$12m in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Twenty men armed with pistols and machine guns robbed a bank in northern Brazil and made off with the equivalent of \$12 million, the country's biggest heist ever, a TV network has reported. The robbers overpowered security agents at the regional headquarters of the state-owned Bank of Brazil in Belem, 2,140 miles (3,450 kilometres) northwest of Rio, reported TV Globo, Brazil's largest network. Globo said the crooks used a blowtorch to open a steel door where the money was guarded. Police set up road blocks at major exits from the city but no one had been arrested, Globo reported. The only possible suspects were six recently hired bank employees. Globo said the stolen money was to have been distributed to regional branches on Wednesday. Police feared it would be difficult to recover the money as only a small part was numbered in sequence, the network said.